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HOME LIFE IN RUSSIA.

BY

A RUSSIAN NOBLE.

Nikolai Vasilevitch Zingarelli

REVISED

BY THE EDITOR OF

"REVELATIONS OF SIBERIA."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

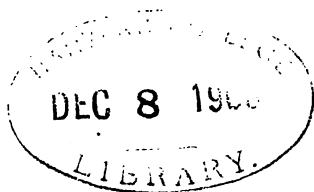
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HOME LIFE IN RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

ON driving up to the entrance-hall, Tchichikoff beheld two faces at once, looking out through the window: the one was a feminine face, narrow and long, like a cucumber; the other was the round face of a man, broad like a Moldavian pumpkin, out of which our Russian peasants are accustomed to make their light and two-stringed balalaikas, the charming instrument with which some handsome cock of the village will on a fine summer's evening gather young and old around him, and sing and whistle some

merry ditty to the white-bosomed maiden of his heart, who delights in the slow and melancholy strains of his music.

The two faces which had just presented themselves at the window disappeared again suddenly. A servant, dressed in a grey jacket with a blue upstanding collar, came out upon the landing and led Tchichikoff into a reception-room, in which soon after the host himself made his appearance. Perceiving and recognizing who his guest was, the host exclaimed abruptly: "Pray, enter!" and he led him into the interior of his house.

As Tchichikoff cast a side glance upon Sobakevitch, the man seemed to him very much like a bear of the middle size. To complete this resemblance, he wore a coat perfectly of the colour of a bear's skin, with large sleeves, and a pair of large inexpressibles. His walk was by starts, sideways and bent together, and he was in the continual habit of treading upon other people's feet. His complexion was of a glowing, hot colour, like that of a new penny.

Tchichikoff glanced once more and stealthily at him as they were passing the dining-room; "A bear, a complete bear!" he thought to him-

self. It was impossible to conceive a more striking resemblance. Knowing that he had the habit of trampling upon other persons' feet, our hero was very careful how he placed his, and allowed him to walk before him. The host seemed to feel the sin of his awkwardness and immediately turned round and said, "Have I, by any chance, hurt you?" But Tchichikoff thanked him, and said, "That as yet he had not felt any inconvenience."

On entering the reception-room, Sobakevitch pointed to an arm-chair, saying again, abruptly, "Pray be seated!" In sitting down Tchichikoff looked at the walls and the pictures that were hanging on them. The pictures all represented finely grown men, apparently the leaders of the last struggle for Hellenic independence; they were full-sized engravings; Mavrocordato in a pair of red breeches and military dress, with a pair of spectacles upon his nose; Miaouli and Kanaris.

All these heroes were represented with such enormous ~~ties~~ and extraordinary moustachios, that the sight of them made Tchichikoff shudder. Among the heroic Hellenes there was also the portrait of the Russian General Bagration,

memorable for his services in the year 1812, a meagre, careworn old man ; heaven knows why he had been placed among these dashing heroes. Next came the portrait of the Grecian heroine, Bobelina, whose foot seemed to be larger than the whole trunk of any of the fashionables of our present drawing-rooms.

The host being a healthy and strong-built man himself, seemed to like that his rooms should also be adorned with the portraits of strong and healthy persons. Close to the Grecian heroine, Bobelina, and quite close to the window, hung a cage, from which a well-fed blackbird was peeping out, which was also very much like Sobakevitch.

The guest and host had not been silent for two minutes, when the door suddenly opened and the lady hostess made her appearance, a lady of a very high figure, in a cap profusely ornamented with ribbons, which seemed to have been dyed at home. She entered the room very ceremoniously, holding her head as straight as a palm-tree.

"This is my beloved Pheodulia Ivanovna !" said Sobakevitch.

Tchichikoff respectfully approached Pheodulia

Ivanovna, and according to Russian fashion, kissed her hand, which she nearly pushed between his lips, at the same time he had an opportunity to observe, or rather smell, that her hands had been washed in salt cucumber water.

"My darling, allow me to introduce you to Pavel Ivanovitch Tchichikoff!" continued Sobakevitch, "I had the honour of making his acquaintance at our Lord-Lieutenant's, and at the Postmaster-general's."

Pheodulia Ivanovna asked Tchichikoff to sit down, saying also very abruptly, "I beg you will be seated!" and making a peculiar movement with her head, not unlike that of an actress playing a tragedy queen. After having done this, she seated herself upon the sofa, covered herself with a merino shawl, and did not again move either her eyes or her lips.

Tchichikoff lifted up his eyes again and beheld once more the Grecian hero, Kanaris, with his enormous ties and interminable moustachios, as well as the heroine, Bobelina, and the blackbird in its cage.

For more than five minutes all three remained silent; the only sign of animation proceeded

from the blackbird, who was pecking the wood of his cage with his beak, and gathering the bread crumbs on the bottom of it. Tchichikoff glanced once more around the room, and all, whatever his eyes beheld—all was solid, clumsy, and tasteless in the highest degree, and had a particular and strange resemblance to the host himself; in one of the corners of the room, there stood a large paunch-bellied nutwood bureau, upon four shapeless legs, a perfect bear. The table, the arm-chairs, the common chairs, all were of the most heavy and uncomfortable description, in a word, every article which constituted the furniture of this room seemed to speak; and I am also Sobakevitch!

“We have been thinking of you at the house of the President of the Courts of Justice, Ivan Gregorievitch,” at last said Tchichikoff, perceiving that no one seemed inclined to break the silence and begin to speak, “we thought of you on Thursday last. I spent a very pleasant evening there.”

“True, I was not at the President’s on that evening,” answered Sobakevitch.

“He is an excellent and worthy man!” exclaimed Tchichikoff.

"Whom do you mean?" said Sobakevitch, looking at the corner of his store.

"The President of the Courts of Justice, to be sure."

"Well, he might have seemed so to you; he is a freemason, and such a fool, that the world cannot produce his equal."

Tchichikoff was rather startled when he heard this cutting qualification of a person he knew, but recovering immediately from his surprise, he continued: "To be sure, every man has his foibles, but I cannot help expressing my admiration for the Governor-General."

"The Lord-Lieutenant, a man worthy of admiration?"

"Yes, and I hope you will agree with me in that opinion?"

"He is the greatest scoundrel on the face of the earth."

"What did you say? the Governor-General the greatest scoundrel?" exclaimed Tchichikoff, perfectly incapable of comprehending how the Lord-Lieutenant of the government of Smolensk could possibly have entered the ranks of scoundrels.

"I must confess, I should never have believed that," he continued. "However, allow me to observe, his actions do not at all seem such, on the contrary, I should rather say that I believe him a man who possesses many pleasant weaknesses." Here he also alluded to the knitting and embroidery talents of his Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant of the province, as an authority for his opinion of him, and expressed himself in the highest terms of the winning expression of the Governor-General's countenance.

"And his face even, is that of a scoundrel!" said Sobakevitch. "Only place a knife in his hands, and let him free upon the high road, he will cut your throat, he will murder you even for a copek! He and the Vice-Governor, also, are of the same cast, they both are Gog and Magog."

"No, I cannot be mistaken, he is not on good terms with them," thought Tchichikoff to himself. "And I think I shall do better to speak to him about the Chief of the Police force, he seems to be his friend."

"However, as far as I am personally concerned," he said, "I must confess that I like

tho Chief Commissioner of the Police force better than any other dignitary in Smolensk. He is such a straightforward and candid man, his face speaks in his favour, and proclaims his kindness of heart."

"He is a rogue," said Sobakevitch very coolly, "he will sell you, betray you, and then even dine with you! I know them all but too well; they are all great rogues, the whole town of Smolensk is inhabited by such men; a rogue sitting on a rogue, and driving on a batch of rogues. All are christian sellers. To my knowledge, there is but one honest man among them, and that man is the Imperial Procurator; but even he, if we were to judge him strictly, even he is a pig."

After such laudatory, though rather short biographies, Tchichikoff perceived that it would be useless to mention any other of the dignitaries of Smolensk, and then only he recollected that Sobakevitch was not in the habit of having a good opinion of any one.

"Come, my darling, let us now go to dinner," said the worthy spouse, Lady Sobakevitch, to her husband.

"Allow me to invite you to dinner," said Sobakevitch. After saying which he advanced towards a table, upon which an introductory meal had been placed: the host and his guest each drank, as is customary, a small glass of brandy, and had a bit of salt fish, or some such appetite-stimulating foretastes, and in doing thus, they but did what is customary in every town and village throughout the vast Russian Empire; thus excited and prepared, they entered the dining-room, into which they followed the hostess, who led them on like a goose her goslings.

A small table was laid for four persons. The fourth place was soon occupied, but it was difficult to say affirmatively by whom, whether that person was a lady or a girl, relation, a guest or friend living in the house; she was not adorned with a cap, was about thirty years of age, and wore a variegated dress.

"Your cabbage-soup, my darling, is delicious to-day," said Sobakevitch to his wife, whilst cutting and helping himself to a second enormous piece of stuffing, and putting it into his soup. This stuffing, as it might be called, for

want of a better denomination in the English language, is a well-known dish in every Russian household, and is always served together with the national sour cabbage-soup ; it is made of the ventricles, head, and feet of a sheep, and stuffed with buck-wheat grits.

"Such stuffing," he continued, turning towards Tchichikoff, "you could not get to eat in town, where they have the habit of serving you with Heaven knows what stuff !"

"The Lord-Lieutenant's dinners, however, are not so contemptible," said Tchichikoff.

"Do you know how and of what stuff his dinners are made ? If you knew it, I'm sure you would not eat them."

"I do not know how they are prepared, and therefore cannot judge ; but his pork-chops and boiled flounders were delicious."

"It seemed so to you. But I know well what they buy in the market. Their cook, the impudent fellow, who seems to have learnt his art in France, is capable of buying a cat, skinning it, roasting it, and serving it up as a hare."

"Fie ! what an unpleasant allusion you make," said his wife.

"And why so, my dear? it is a fact, and I am sure they do that, if not even worse. All that we would throw away in our country kitchen, the town people would put in their soup, and find it even a delicacy—yes, a delicacy. Such is their taste!"

"You are always in the habit of talking such nonsense at table," said his wife, with an evident air of displeasure.

"Why, my heart," said Sobakevitch, "if I was to do it myself, it would be a different thing; but I tell you candidly that I will never eat any of their stuff. You may cover a frog with a crust of sugar, and yet I would not take it into my mouth, nor what they call oysters; I know what oysters are like."

"Take some mutton," he continued, addressing himself to Tchichikoff; "this is a shoulder of mutton with grits. This is not a stew, as they make it in town kitchens, where they employ mutton which has been offered for sale for three or four days in the market."

Hereupon Sobakevitch shook his head angrily, whilst adding:

"When I am to have some roast or boiled pork, let me have the whole pig on the table;

if some mutton, I want to look at the whole animal; if a goose, let me have the whole bird. I would rather feed on one dish, but feed to my heart's content."

Sobakevitch confirmed this principle by the deed: he placed the half of the shoulder of mutton on his plate, ate it all, picked and licked over the bones to the last.

"Yes," thought Tchichikoff to himself, "his lips are as good as his mouth."

"It is not so with me," said Sobakevitch, whilst wiping his hands and mouth on a napkin, "it is not with me as it is with a Pluschkin; he has eight hundred serfs, but eats a worse dinner than any of my shepherds."

"Who is this Pluschkin?" inquired Tchichikoff.

"A scoundrel," answered Sobakevitch. "His avarice is so great that you cannot form an idea of it. A prisoner lives better than him. He nearly starves all his peasants."

"Really!" Tchichikoff exclaimed, with evident interest; "and you believe that many of his serfs have died from want?"

"They die like flies."

"Do they really! But allow me to ask you, how far he lives from your estate?"

"About five wersts."

"About five wersts!" Tchichikoff exclaimed again, and even felt a perceptible pulsation of the heart. "But if I was to drive out of your court-yard, would it be on the right or on the left-hand side?"

"I would not advise you even to know the road to that dog's kennel!" said Sobakevitch. "It is more excusable to visit some forbidden place, than the house of such a man as Pluschkin."

"Oh no, I did not ask that for any particular purpose; but simply because I take an interest in knowing something about places and positions of every description," was the reply of Tchichikoff.

After the shoulder of mutton followed some flounders, of which each was considerably larger than the plates; then a turkey, nearly of the size of a young calf, stuffed with all kinds of good things—with eggs, rice, liver, and a variety of other condiments, which all had been pressed into the fowl's stomach.

With the turkey, the dinner had an end; but

when they rose from the table, Tchichikoff felt heavier by at least half a hundredweight. They entered the reception-room, where some sweetmeats, such as pears, cherries, strawberries and other berries, preserved in sugar or honey, were displayed on small china plates; however, neither the guest nor the host could or would touch any. The lady hostess left the room for the purpose of displaying some other kind upon other small plates, in the hope that her guest would like to taste some of them. Profiting by her momentary absence, Tchichikoff turned towards Sobakevitch, who was lying in an arm-chair, and groaning after such a more than copious dinner, and allowing some indistinct sounds to escape from his mouth, using the one hand to make the sign of the cross, and holding the other before his mouth. Tchichikoff addressed him in the following words:

"I should have liked to speak to you about a certain little business."

"Here are some more sweetmeats," said the hostess, returning with some few small plates; "these are very rare fruits, and preserved in honey."

"Very well, my darling, we'll taste them

later," said Sobakevitch. "You had better now return into your own room, for Pavel Ivanovitch and myself are going to take off our coats and rest ourselves a little."

Lady Sobakevitch offered to send in some soft pillows, but her husband opposed it, and answered her, "Never mind, we will take our rest in these arm-chairs;" and the lady left the room.

CHAPTER II.

SOBAKEVITCH bent his head slightly on one side, prepared to hear what the little business consisted in.

Tchichikoff began to speak, but his argument was of a very obscure nature; he alluded in very general terms to the whole Russian Empire, and expressed himself in terms of great praise about its territorial extent, and said, that even the ancient Roman Empire was far less in extent and power, and that other nations are justly surprised at the magnitude of the largest Empire in the world.

Sobakevitch continued to listen, with his head bent on one side.

And that, according to existing statutes of this vast empire—the grandeur of which has no equal—the census population, namely, those who have to pay a capitation tax, though hundreds and thousands of them have already, since then, terminated their worldly existence, remain still upon the lists, and are taxed until the next census be taken—a period of fifty years—on a *par* with the living; although, and it must not be forgotten, that, as a medium of equalization, the new-born population within the space of these fifty years is not liable to any taxation before the next census be taken again; and this was done for the purpose of not over-burthening the imperial administrations with too many difficult and tedious regulations, but principally to avoid as far as possible any additional complication of the already over-complicated mechanism of the imperial administrations.

Sobakevitch still listened with his head bent on one side.

And, that notwithstanding the justice and efficiency of this measure, it yet presented but too numerous instances of heavy burthen and great expense to the majority of landed proprietors, obliging them to pay the tax for both

their dead serfs as well as for their living subjects, and that he, Tchichikoff, feeling a particular and personal regard for him, Sobakevitch, was willing to undertake the payment of this burthensome capitation tax for the dead, in consequence of his unfeigned esteem and friendship for him. As regards the principal objects themselves, Tchichikoff expressed himself very carefully indeed ; in alluding to them, he never called them dead serfs, but not existing, poor souls.

During the whole period of Tchichikoff's speech, Sobakevitch had continued to listen silently as before, with his head slightly inclined on one side, and not even once was there the slightest change in his countenance, or a different expression visible in his face. It seemed as if this body had no soul, or as if it was not at all where it ought to have been ; like an indefatigable miser, he seemed to have hidden it in some secret corner, and covered with such an impenetrable shell, that whatever battered upon its surface could not stir or move the kernel within.

“ And thus,” said Tchichikoff, awaiting a

reply with some degree of anxious expectation.

"You want some dead serfs?" demanded Sobakevitch, simply, without the slightest emotion or surprise, as if the question was about bread, salt, or meat.

"Yes," answered Tchichikoff; and again he softened down the expression, adding, "the non existing ones."

"I can let you have some; why not?" said Sobakevitch.

"And, since you have some, I have no doubt—you will be glad to get rid of them?"

"With pleasure; I am ready to sell them," said Sobakevitch, whilst slightly raising his head, for he began to suspect that the purchaser would undoubtedly know how to derive an advantage from his speculation.

"The devil!" thought Tchichikoff to himself, "this man wants to sell them before I have made him an offer to purchase any!" and he then said aloud: "And what would your price be? although I must confess that the objects are such, that it is rather strange to speak of a price."

"Well then, and in order not to ask a high price from you, I will fix them at a hundred roubles a-piece," said Sobakevitch.

"A hundred roubles !" exclaimed Tchichikoff, opening his mouth widely, and looking him straight into the eyes, not knowing whether he had heard rightly, or whether Sobakevitch's tongue, prompted by his heavy intelligence, had tripped, and pronounced accidentally one word for another.

"Well, is that too dear for you ?" articulated Sobakevitch ; and then he added : "But allow me to ask, what would your price be ?"

"My price ! We have, no doubt, misunderstood one another ; we seem to have forgotten what our subject is. As far as I am concerned, and laying my hand upon my heart, one rouble would be the fairest price I could offer you."

"Halloa ! what a ridiculous price, to be sure, one rouble !"

"Why, according to my judgment, and as I think, I could not give more."

"But remember, I do not sell you any cat's-paws."

"However, you must agree; they are not any real men."

"That is your opinion; but go and find me such a fool, who would agree to sell you a census serf for a single rouble."

"But allow me to ask you, why do you call them census serfs? They are dead long since, nothing remains of them but an incomprehensible sound in their appellation. However, in order to avoid the trouble of entering more particularly in a discussion on abstract matters, I am ready to offer you one rouble and a half, but more I really could not."

"You ought to be ashamed to offer me such a price! You like to drive a bargain; well then, tell me your real price."

"I really cannot offer you more, my dear Michael Semenovitch, believe me, on my honour, I cannot. What cannot be done that might be done?" said Tchichikoff; yet, notwithstanding, he made an addition of half a rouble.

"Why are you so niggardly?" said Sobakevitch; "it is really not dear. Another scoundrel would cheat you; he would not sell you real serfs like I do, but some worthless stuff;

all mine are like green hazel-nuts, all picked men; and if they are not artizans by profession, still they are strong, healthy, and fit for everything. Just let us examine them a little. There is, for an example, my former cart-maker, Micheeff; he never worked at anything less than a spring-cart. And, if you please, not such workmanship as they sell you at Moscow, which lasts for an hour, and not longer; oh no, his work was of first-rate durability, and besides, he used to do the carving and polishing work as well."

Tchichikoff opened his mouth, with the intention of making the observation, that the peasant Micheeff, the spring-cart maker, had already left this world for some time; but Sobakevitch entered suddenly, as the phrase goes, with spirit into the nature of the subject, Heaven only knows whence he derived his power of language and vigour of expression; however, he continued:

"And my Stephan, the joiner! I'd wager my head, that you cannot find me another peasant like he was. He was a regular Hercules! If he had served in the guards, he would have

been one of the finest soldiers in the regiment, he was above seven feet high!"

Tchichikoff was again on the point of making the observation, that Stephan had also departed this world; but Sobakevitch, as it appeared, was carried away by his subject, his flow of language was not easily to be stopped, now was the time to listen to him.

"Milushkin, the potter, was capable of putting you a stove in any part of the house. Again, Maxim Teliatnikoff, the shoemaker; whatever he pierced with his awl, became a pair of boots, and whatever boots he made, for such I paid him the compliment of a thank you. And Germei Sorokopleokin! I can assure you that this fellow alone was worth all the others, he used to hawk about in Moscow, and paid me an annual quit-rent of five hundred roubles. Such were the people, and far from such stuff as you might buy from a fellow like Pluschkin."

"But allow me to observe," Tchichikoff at last said, quite bewildered by such an abundance of words, to which there promised now to be no end, "why do you enumerate all their former professions? all these qualities are of no

use to them or others now, because all these people are dead, at this time being."

"Oh, yes, to be sure, they are dead," said Sobakevitch, as if considering and recollecting suddenly, that they were in reality all dead and gone, and then he added, "however, I must observe, what are the people now reckoned as living? yes, what are these people? flies, but not men!"

"But for all that they exist, and that is a point of imagination."

"Oh no, not at all a point of imagination! I will describe to you what a fellow my Micheeff was, and I am sure you will not be able to find many more like him; he was of such a size, that he could not have entered this room, and that is no point of imagination! And in his shoulders, he possessed such power as you will rarely meet with in a horse; I am therefore curious to know where you could find such another point of imagination?"

"No, really, I could not offer you any more than two roubles," Tchichikoff said again.

"Very well, then, and in order to be agreeable to you, and that you might not pretend that I

demanded too high a price, and that I would not oblige you, you shall have them at seventy-five roubles each dead serf, but all in bank notes, and I really do it all out of friendship for you."

"Does he really take me for a fool," thought Tchichikoff to himself, and then added aloud: "All this seems very strange to me; it would appear that we are playing a comedy, else I really could not explain how—you seem to be a man of sound judgment, you can pretend to a superior education, don't you therefore see and understand, that the object in question is simply, phu, phu! what is it really worth? who could make use of it?"

"But you wish to purchase them, I think it therefore obvious that you want them."

When Tchichikoff heard this, he bit his lips, and could not find an answer. He began to mutter something about family connexions and household circumstances, but Sobakevitch interrupted him, and said simply:

"I do not want to know anything about your circumstances, I never mix in family concerns, all that is your own affair. You stand in want

of serfs, I am ready to sell some, and I may add, you will be dissatisfied with yourself if you don't buy them of me."

"Well then, two roubles," said Tchichikoff.

"What a curious man you are; you seem to have fixed upon two, and now you cannot get off them. Offer me your last price."

"May the devil take him," thought Tchichikoff to himself, "I will give him half a rouble more, and make the proverb true, for the dog to buy nuts with!"

"Very well then, I offer you half a rouble more."

"Now then, I will also tell you my last word; fifty roubles! really it is a loss to me, you will not buy them cheaper anywhere, especially such excellent peasants as they were!"

"What a fist that man is to be sure," said Tchichikoff to himself, and then he continued aloud with a slight degree of anger:

"Really, I must confess, it was ridiculous to treat the matter as serious, because in many another place I could get dead serfs for nothing. Many a one would be extremely glad to give them to me, and thus get rid of them as soon

as possible. A fool would he be indeed, who after my offer would still persist to keep them and continue to pay the capitation tax."

"But do you know also, that purchases of this description—I say this between ourselves, and in good friendship—are not always safe and practicable; and if I, or any one else was to mention them to a third party, such a person could get himself into great difficulties, and expose himself to lose all confidence for the future, as regards trust in contracts or any other business transactions."

"Oh, the rascal, that is what he is aiming at," thought Tchichikoff, and here he spoke with an air of great unconcern, "as you like, my dear Sir, I wish to buy them, not for any particular purpose, as you seem to suppose, but simply from a fancy, an inclination of my own. If you won't accept two roubles and a half then, fare you well!"

"I shall not be able to confuse him: he is obstinate," thought Sobakevitch. "Heaven be with you! give me thirty and take them all!"

"No, I perceive you don't wish to sell them. Farewell!"

"Stop, stop! wait a little!" exclaimed Sobakevitch, holding him by the hand, and treading upon his feet, because our hero had forgotten to take care of himself, and as a punishment for it, he was obliged to limp upon one leg.

"I beg your pardon! It seems I have hurt you. Pray be seated here. I beg your pardon once more."

Hereupon he made him sit down again and rather cleverly too, as a bear would do who has been already taught to perform some evolution.

"Really, I think I am only losing my time; besides I am in a hurry."

"Pray sit down, if but for a moment. I will tell you immediately something very pleasant."

Hereupon, Sobakevitch seated himself quite close to Tchichikoff, and whispered into his ear, as if a secret:

"Will you make it a quarter?"

"That is to say, twenty-five roubles. No, no, no, I will not even give you a quarter of a quarter. I will not give you an additional copek."

Sobakevitch remained silent ; Tchichikoff did the same.

This silence lasted for about two minutes. The Grecian hero Kolokotroni looked very seriously from his frame on the wall upon the bargaining parties below.

"What will really be your last price?" said Sobakevitch at last.

"Two roubles and a half."

"Really a human soul seemed to have with you no greater value than a dried beet-root. Give me at least three roubles."

"I cannot."

"Well! what am I to do with you? You shall have them. It is a loss to me, and no mistake; but such is my doggish nature, I could never refuse to be agreeable to my fellow-creatures. But I think I am right in saying that it will be requisite to draw up a contract of sale for the lawful settlement of the bargain."

"Most certainly."

"In that case, I shall have to go to Smolensk," said Sobakevitch.

Thus then the bargain for Sobakevitch's dead serfs was concluded. They agreed to

meet the next day in town, and to settle all the formalities of the contract of sale at their first meeting there.

Tchichikoff now demanded a list of all the dead serfs that were to become his property. To this request Sobakevitch agreed willingly, and sat down immediately at his writing-desk, and wrote down not only the names of every one, but also their laudable qualifications.

"The note is ready," Sobakevitch soon said as he turned round.

"Ready? Allow me to look at it." Tchichikoff took the paper in his hand, and whilst running his eyes over it, he was surprised to behold its neatness and accuracy; not only were profession, name, age and family estate minutely noted down, but there was even a special column in which particular annotations had been made as regarded the degree of morality and conduct of his deceased serfs; in a word, it was a real pleasure to look at the document.

"Now I hope you will have no objection to pay me a god-penny," said Sobakevitch.

"Why should I give you anything on account? You shall receive the whole amount at once, on our first meeting in town."

"You well know that such is the custom with us in the country," replied Sobakevitch.

"I really do not know how I am to manage that, for I have not much money about me. However, here is a ten-rouble note."

"What are ten roubles? Give me at least fifty."

Tchichikoff wanted to make him believe that he could not spare any more for the present; but Sobakevitch insisted so positively that he had some more money about him, that he could not help producing another bank-note, and saying:

"Very well, then, since you insist upon having some more, here are fifteen more, which makes it altogether twenty-five roubles. But allow me now to trouble you for a receipt."

"What do you want a receipt for?"

"You know well it is better to have a receipt for the payment of money. Our hours of existence are uncertain — something might happen."

"Very well, let me have the money."

"Why should you have the money first? I hold the notes here in my hand. As soon as you will have written the receipt,

in that same moment you may have the money."

"Pardon me; how am I to write out a receipt? I must first see the money."

Tchichikoff allowed the bank-notes to be taken from his hand, and Sobakevitch being now in possession of them, approached the table and covering them with his left hand, began to write out with his right the receipt upon a small piece of paper, that he had received an account of twenty-five roubles in imperial bank-notes for a number of serfs sold by him to Pavel Ivanovitch Tchichikoff. After having written and signed the receipt, he once more examined the bank-notes.

"This note is a rather old one," remarked he, slowly, whilst carefully examining one of them against the light; "a little torn also. However, we must not look upon these trifles when we deal with friends."

"Oh! you fist, you fist!" thought Tchichikoff to himself, "and a beast besides."

"By the bye, would you perhaps like to have some of my females?"

"No, I am very much obliged to you for the offer all the same."

"I should not have asked a high price ; out of regard for you, I would not charge more than a rouble a-piece."

"No, I do not stand in want of any of the female sex."

"Well, if you cannot make any use of them, then it is useless to speak another word about them. It is impossible to dispute on matter of colour and taste. 'The one likes the pope, the other his wife,' as our proverb says."

"Oh, I nearly forgot to ask you to keep this little transaction a secret between ourselves," said Tchichikoff in taking leave.

"Oh yes, this is perfectly understood. It is useless to mix a third in this matter ; that which happens by common consent between intimate friends, must remain in their friendship. Farewell ! I was glad to see you. Do not forget me in future. If you should have an hour to spare, come and dine and pass a little time with us. It might again happen that we could be agreeable one to another."

"Don't you believe it !" thought Tchichikoff to himself, whilst taking his seat in the britchka. "He has charged me two roubles and a half

for each of his dead serfs! the man is the devil's own fist!"

When the britchka had left the court-yard of the house, Tchichikoff turned round to cast a last glance around him, and in looking back, he saw that Sobakevitch still stood upon the door-step of his house, and, as it seemed, was looking out to see what turning his guest was about to take.

"The fist, he is still on the same spot," murmured Tchichikoff between his teeth, and ordered Selifan, who had just turned in the direction of the village, to drive his carriage in such a manner that they should not be seen from the gentleman's house.

He intended calling at Pluschkin's, whose serfs, according to the words of Sobakevitch were dying like flies, but he did not wish that Sobakevitch should know about it. When the britchka had passed the last house in the village, he hailed the first peasant whom he happened to see, and who was carrying a large log of wood upon his shoulders, like an indefatigable ant towards his dwelling, and addressed him thus:

"Halloa, my bearded man! how can I drive

to Pluschkin's estate, without passing your master's house?"

The mouzhik seemed obviously embarrassed at the question.

"Well, don't you know?"

"No, your glory, I don't."

"Eh, what a fellow you are! And with all that you wear grey hair and beard! don't you know the miser Pluschkin, who has the reputation of starving his peasants?"

"Ah, you mean the ragged one!" exclaimed the peasant. He then added another stronger surname, but as it is an expression not used in society, we will omit it, though it was a strong and harmonizing word with the first surname of the miser. It might be easily imagined that the second surname must have been a very pointed one indeed, for although the peasant had passed on, and the britchka had been long out of sight from the village, Tchichikoff was still smiling at the word whilst sitting in his britchka.

011.

CHAPTER III.

ON driving up to the house, Tchichikoff soon perceived a human figure, who began to converse with the peasant who had just arrived with his telega. For a long while he could not discover to what sex this figure belonged; whether it was an old woman or a mouzhik. The dress was absolutely shapeless, but nevertheless very much like a female's garb, the head-dress was a kind of colpack, as worn by the aged village crones, yet the voice seemed to him to be too loud for a woman's.

"Oh, 'tis an old woman!" he thought for a moment to himself, and immediately added: "oh, no. To be sure, 'tis a woman," he said at last, after a closer examination.

The figure, on its side, also looked very attentively at Tchichikoff. A guest or a stranger seemed to be to it a wonderful apparition, because it not only looked at him alone, but also at Selifan and the horses, beginning from their tails, and ending with their heads. To judge by the keys which were hanging down its left side by a broad belt, and because it was scolding the poor peasant of the cart in a very loud voice, Tchichikoff came to the conclusion that this figure was obviously the housekeeper.

"Halloa, old mother," said he, as he got out of his britchka, "where is your master?"

"Not at home," the housekeeper interrupted him, not waiting even for the question to be finished, but a moment later she added: "and what do you want?"

"I have some business with him."

"Will you then walk into this room," said the housekeeper, turning round and showing him her back covered all over with flour, and the lower portion of her garb torn beneath.

He entered a large and dark passage, the air in which was as cold and damp as in a cellar. From the passage he emerged into a

small room, also very dark, scarcely enlivened by a glimpse of light, which shone through a large crevice in the lower portion of the door opposite. On opening this broken door before him, he at last entered an apartment in which real daylight greeted him, though the disorder which prevailed in it surprised him considerably.

It seemed as if the other portions of the house were undergoing a regular scrubbing, and that this room had been chosen for the temporary reception of all the furniture. Upon one of the large tables stood an old broken chair, and, next to it lay an old clock with its silent pendulum, around which some spiders had already found time to spin their cobwebs. There also leant against the wall an old-fashioned cupboard, covered with old silver plate, decanters, glasses and china.

Upon a large writing table, inlaid with mother of pearl mosaic, which was broken out in many places, leaving but the yellow spots of the mastic behind, lay a variety of objects; a heap of written small slips of papers, upon which lay a marble letter-weight with a handle in the shape of an egg on it, an ancient looking book, bound in rough Russian leather with red

edges, a lemon, dried and withered away to the size of a walnut, a piece of a broken arm-chair, a wine glass containing a dark fluid with three dead flies in it, a few letters, some sealing-wax, a small dirty rag, picked up somewhere on the road, two quills, besmeared all over with ink, which had dried upon them long since, a tooth-brush, which had become quite yellow from age and use, and with which the owner seemed to have been in the habit of cleaning his teeth ever since the French invasion of 1812.

Whilst Tchichikoff was still looking around him at the strange arrangement of this apartment, the same housekeeper entered again, through a small side door, which he had seen on his arrival in the court-yard. But now this person appeared to him rather a steward than a female housekeeper : because a woman is not likely to use a razor upon her face, and this person seemed to have the habit of shaving, though it appeared to be done but occasionally, because the whole of the lower portion of her face looked rather like a scrubbing-brush for a horse's skin made of strong iron wire.

Tchichikoff giving his face an expression of

inquisitiveness, now looked anxiously forward, awaiting the steward to be the first speaker. The steward, in his turn, seemed also determined to await what Tchichikoff had to say in explanation of his presence.

At last, however, our hero getting tired of this unpleasant suspense and silence, resolved to address the strange-looking person before him.

"Well, where is your master? is he at home?"

"He is here," said the steward.

"Where is he?" repeated Tchichikoff.

"Well, my good Sir, you are perhaps short-sighted," said the steward. "I am the master whom you wish to see."

Hereupon our hero could not help stepping back a few paces and looking steadfastly at the man before him.

It had happened to him to meet with people of all bodily descriptions, even with such persons as most likely our courteous reader and ourselves never met; but such a man as he now saw before him he had never met with before.

His face did not present any particularly striking features; it was nearly like all faces

of lean and old men ; his chin projected to such an extent that he was obliged to cover it with his pocket-handkerchief so as not to spit upon it occasionally ; his small eyes very far from being dimmed by age, on the contrary, from under their heavy eyebrows they glittered like those of a mouse, when that little animal comes forward from its hole and puts forth its little snout to smell about if there is any danger from a cat, or whether some naughty boy has not laid a trap for it.

His dress was much more characteristic and remarkable. No investigation or expedient would have availed to discover of what peculiar material his morning-gown had been patched together ; the sleeves and upper body of his dress were greased and besmeared to such a degree, that they actually had the appearance if not exactly the peculiar smell of that celebrated Russian leather called "jüchte," and which is commonly used among the lower classes to make their boots of.

From his back, four skirts hung loosely down instead of two, and out of which the cotton wadding was profusely bursting forth. There was also something tied round his neck, but it

was impossible to define whether it was a stocking, a garter, or a pair of braces ; at all events, it was not a neckerchief.

In a word, if Tchichikoff had met this man thus attired near the portal of a church, he would have undoubtedly tendered him a few coppers, for be it said to the honour of our hero that he was of a charitable disposition, and that he could seldom resist the temptation of giving a copek to a beggar.

But before him there now stood not a beggar, but a Russian landlord of rank. A man who called more than a thousand human beings his own serfs, and it would have also been difficult for any one to find many other proprietors possessing such extensive granaries filled with such a variety and quantity of corn, flour, and meal—or to behold stores and warehouses like his, stocked with equal quantities of linen, cloth, wool, in fleeces, and shorn from the skin, smoked meats, dried fish, and other products of a fertile soil.

Pluschkin had been standing for some minutes without speaking a word, but Tchichikoff was still unable to begin a conversation, for he was completely disconcerted by the singular

appearance of the man before him, as well as by everything that surrounded him in the room. For a long time he could not imagine in what terms to explain the object of his visit. He was several times on the point of expressing himself in the following terms: that, having heard the praise of his benevolence and the rare qualities of his heart, he felt it to be his duty to come and pay his personal tribute at the shrine of such great virtues, but he suddenly bethought himself, and felt that this would be saying too much.

Casting another hasty glance upon everything in the room, he came to the conclusion, that the words benefactor and rare qualities of the heart, might be successfully replaced by the following terms: economy and order; after this observation, he adapted his address in consequence and spoke thus:—

“That he had heard much to the advantage of his system of economy and the wise administration of his vast estates, and that he therefore felt it his duty to seek his acquaintance and acknowledge personally his profound esteem for a man of such great reputation.” We must confess, that some more plausible reason might

have been brought forward, however; nothing better suggested itself to the mind of our hero at that particular moment.

To this complimentary address, Pluschkin murmured something in reply between his lips, because he had no teeth; what the exact words were it is impossible for us to tell, very likely something to the following effect: "The devil take you and your esteem!"

But, as hospitality is still in fashion with us, so much in fashion indeed, that even a miser dare not offend its laws and privileges, therefore the old niggard added immediately, and a little more audibly, "I pray you, Sir, be seated!"

"It is long since I have received company," said he, "and I must candidly confess I see no advantage in welcoming idle visitors. Some foolish people have introduced the fashion of driving about from one estate to the other, and thus neglect their own households—and if they happen to arrive, you have even to feed their horses and men as well! I have already dined some hours since, and my kitchen is so very low, badly constructed, and the chimney is crumbling, that, were I to order some fire again I might easily set the whole house on fire."

"Oh, oh, is that it!" thought Tchichikoff to himself, "it is well I made a good dinner at Sobakevitch's house, on the cabbage and shoulder of mutton."

"And a truss of hay and some bushels of oats are no joke in these hard times in any household!" continued Pluschkin, "and really, the more I think of it the more absurd this evil custom seems to me. I have but a small estate, my peasants are idle and do not like to work, but think only how to get into the dram-shop—really it is frightful to contemplate, one might easily go begging."

"However, I have been told," calmly observed Tchichikoff, "that you call more than a thousand serfs your own."

"And who has told you that? My dear Sir, you ought to have spit into the face of that person who told you this! he is a fool and wants to pass a joke upon you. All proclaim me to be the possessor of a thousand souls, but if they were to number them they would really find none. During the last three years the fever has carried off numbers of my best and healthiest peasants."

"Is it possible! and have you indeed lost

many?" exclaimed Tchichikoff, with visible interest.

"Yes, the fever has carried off a great many."

"But allow me to inquire how many in number?"

"About eighty souls."

"No, is it really so many?"

"My good Sir, I have no interest to hide the truth."

"Allow me to ask you one more question. I suppose you estimate the number of your dead serfs to be eighty, since you handed in your last census?"

"If that was the case, I should thank heaven for not having lost more," said Pluschkin, "no, my good Sir, since I sent my last census to government, and paid my capitation tax, I have lost more than one hundred and twenty serfs!"

"Really, one hundred and twenty peasants!" exclaimed again Tchichikoff loudly, and even opened his mouth more than usual, in consequence of his astonishment.

"Good Sir, I am too old to tell a falsehood.

I am fast advancing to my fourth score," said Pluschkin. He seemed even a little offended at the stranger's apparently joyful exclamation.

Tchichikoff also observed that he had gone too far in not observing due compassion with that which another person considers a grievous loss; and, therefore, after heaving a deep sigh, he added that he felt the greatest commiseration for him.

"'Tis all very fine talking about commiseration, but with all that you cannot put it in your pocket," replied Pluschkin. "I may quote as an example a certain colonel, who lives on an estate next to mine, and who has come heaven knows wherefrom! he says that he is a relation of mine; calls me his uncle, his dear grand uncle! and even kisses my hands; but when he begins to speak of his commiseration, he raises such a howling, that I do not know how to save my ears. He has a face all on fire; and with all that appearance pretends to like meagre fare and buckwheat grits. No doubt that young fellow spent all his money when he served in the army, or some ballet-

girl has cheated him out of it ; and that I must suppose makes him now so full of commiseration !”

Tchichikoff endeavoured to explain to the old man, that his commiseration was quite of a different nature from that of the colonel, and that he was ready to prove it, not with empty words, but with tangible facts ; and without any further arguments, he proceeded to the business at once, and informed the old miser of his readiness to undertake the payment of the capitation tax for all such of his peasants as had died since the last census, victims of a contagious fever.

This proposal seemed perfectly to bewilder Pluschkin. He opened his eyes wildly, looked for a long time steadfastly into the face of the speaker, and at last put the following question to him :

“ Pardon me, my good Sir, but have you perhaps also served in the army ?”

“ No,” answered Tchichikoff, with a pleasing air of artfulness, “ I have served in the civil ranks.”

“ Oh ! a civilian ?” repeated Pluschkin, and

began to move his lips, as if he was eating something. "But how do you mean it? This offer which you make to me, would be a positive expense to yourself?"

"To be agreeable to you, I am even willing to be a loser."

"Oh, my good Sir! oh, you are my benefactor!" exclaimed Pluschkin, so much overcome with joy, that he did not observe that a large drop of fluid snuff had made its appearance on the point of his nose, and that whilst raising his arms to accompany his exclamations he opened his morning-gown, and thus displayed an under-dress not at all fit for description.

"What a consolation you have brought me! oh, good Heaven! oh, my holy saints!—" and more than this Pluschkin was incapable of articulating.

But a minute had scarcely elapsed, since this joy had shown itself so suddenly upon the mummy-like face of the old man, when it again as suddenly disappeared from his features, and his face again assumed its usual expression of care and anxiety. He recovered even as far again his self-possession as to wipe his nose,

and rolling his handkerchief into a ball, he began to pass it across his lips, to and fro.

“With your permission, and without wishing to offend you in the least, will you allow me to ask you, whether you will agree to undertake to pay the tax annually till the next census? and the money for it, would you like to pay it to me, or at once into the imperial treasury?”

“I would suggest that we should come to the following arrangement: we will draw up a contract of sale, in which we will agree that all the hundred-and-twenty serfs are alive, and that you have sold them to me.”

“Oh, by a contract of sale,” said Pluschkin, musingly, and again munching his lips. “But you see, my dear Sir, a contract of sale is an expense. And the imperial *employés* are so very impudent indeed! Formerly you could oblige them to do their duty by presenting them with a rouble and a sack of flour, but now-a-day one is obliged to send them nearly a cart-load of grits and a ten rouble note besides, there is such a love for money now prevalent among them. I am quite surprised how it is that nobody else has paid any at-

tention to this real nuisance. Some one ought to have come forward and spoken words of exhortation and salvation to those rogues! Words of exhortation pierce every heart. Whatever people may say, I am of opinion that no sinner can resist words of salvation."

"I should say, you could resist them!" thought Tchichikoff to himself, and he added aloud, that he was ready—out of pure esteem for the old man—to pay the expense of the contract of sale out of his own pocket.

On hearing this offer made to him, that even the expenses of the contract of sale would not be an expense to him, Pluschkin came to the conclusion that his strange guest must be completely deranged, and that he only pretended he had been in the civil service of his country, and that there could be no doubt that he had served as an officer in the army, and had been in the habit of courting actresses and ballet-girls.

Notwithstanding this opinion, he could impossibly hide his satisfaction, and wished his guest and his children and grandchildren all the blessings of Providence, without asking him previously whether he was married, and

whether he had any family. He then hurried towards the window, and thumping with his bony fingers on the glass, he shouted out :

“Holloa, Proschka.”

In a minute later, hurried footsteps were heard in the passage, and soon after behind the door of the apartment in which our hero and his host were ; but the person outside continued for some time making a fearful noise with his boots, at last the door was opened and Proschka entered. He was a boy of about thirteen years of age ; the boots which he wore were so large, that each step which he made forwards threatened to leave his boots behind.

Why the boy, Proschka, wore such a large pair of boots we can explain immediately ; Pluschkin kept for the whole of his retinue—however many—but one pair of boots, which were always to be left behind the door in the passage. Every servant who was called by his master was obliged to skip bare-footed across the court-yard, but as soon as he entered the long and dark passage leading to his lord’s apartment he was obliged to step into the boots, and then only allowed to enter the room of his master.

In leaving the chamber, he had to strip him-

self of those boots, and return to his own quarters on his natural soles. If any one had happened to have been standing at the window of Pluschkin's mansion—especially on a freezing autumn morning—he would have witnessed the skipping and jumping of the whole of his domestic servants, who made such evolutions as can scarcely be equalled by even the cleverest clown or ballet dancer.

“But, do me the favour, my good Sir, to look at this boy's face!” said Pluschkin to Tchichikoff, whilst pointing to the face of his servant boy, Proschka, “he seems as stupid as a log of wood, but try only to leave anything lying loose, in a minute he is sure to steal it! Now then, stupid boy, what have you come here for?”

After having said this he remained silent a few moments, which was answered by a silence from Proschka as well.

“Heat the samovar, do you hear me? and then give this key to Mavra, and tell her to go into the pantry; there she will find a large fish biscuit—given to me by Lady Alexander Stepanovna—tell her to serve this cake with the tea!”

After saying this, he could not help looking with an air of suspicion even upon Tchichikoff. Such traits of unusual generosity began to appear to him quite impossible, and he thought to himself:—

“The devil knows him and where he comes from ; he might be a man fond of boasting, like all those military spendthrifts ; he will humbug me just to have something to boast about, drink my tea, eat my cake, and then say farewell !”

After reasoning thus with himself, he came to the conclusion that it would be better to be careful and test the honesty of his strange guest, and he therefore proposed that it would be a good thing to proceed at once to the drawing up of the contract of sale, because man was mortal ; to-day alive, and to-morrow heaven knows where.

CHAPTER IV.

TCHICHIKOFF assured the old miser of his readiness to conclude the contract that very minute, and only demanded a list of all the peasants that were now to become his property.

This readiness considerably tranquillized Pluschkin. It was obvious that he was trying to remember or do something, and really, after a few moments of reflection and hesitation, he approached his cupboard, produced a bunch of keys, and opened the glass doors of it, he was a considerable time in removing a number of decanters, wine glasses, and cups, and at last exclaimed: "It is impossible for me to find it now, I had some sweet liquors of cream, pro-

vided my servants have not drunk it! they are so disobedient! Ah, should this perhaps be it?"

Tchichikoff now beheld a small decanter in his hands, which was thickly covered by a coat of dust. "This was distilled by my late and much lamented wife," continued Pluschkin; "my roguish housekeeper seems to have completely mislaid it, and has not even put the cork in, the negligent old wretch! Cobwebs, spiders, and flies have fallen into the bottle, however, I have removed them, and will now pour out some for you, a nice and clean glass full."

But Tchichikoff respectfully declined to taste any of such liquor, saying that he had already been eating and drinking.

"You have already been eating and drinking;" said Pluschkin. "Yes, truly, a well-bred man may be recognised by the smallest trifles; he does not eat, and yet is fed; but when some of those hungry and dishonest run-abouts come, you may feed them as long as you like. The Captain for instance—who visits me by far too often; 'dear uncle,' he is accustomed to say, 'pray let me have first something to eat!' and

after all, I am as dear an uncle to him as he is a nephew to me. I have not the least doubt, but the young fellow has nothing to eat at home, and of course keeps annoying me, and running about everywhere. But, by the bye, I think you will require a list of all these idlers? To be sure, whenever one of them died, I made it a point to note down his name, so as to have them ready for being scratched off at the approaching census."

Pluschkin while saying this, put on a pair of wretched spectacles, and began to stir about in a heap of papers. In untying various packages, he treated his guest to such a cloud of dust, that he made him sneeze. At last he produced a slip of paper, written upon on every available space. The names of the dead serfs covered it as thickly as mushrooms. There were Christian and family names of every kind and length, such as Ponomareff, Pimenoff, Semenoff, and Panteleimonoff, and even the long name of Gregory Dogeschainedogedish; in all more than a hundred-and-twenty different names.

Tchichikoff smiled with inward satisfaction at the sight of such a number. Securing this

curious document, and putting it in his pocket, he made the observation to Pluschkin, that he would have to come to town in order to conclude, in a legal manner, the contract of sale of these dead serfs.

“Go to town, but how? how am I to leave my house? my servants are one and all either thieves or scoundrels, in a day they would be capable of robbing me so well, that on my return I should not be able even to find a nail to hang my coat upon.”

“In that case, you have perhaps a friend in town?”

“Yes, to be sure, a friend, but to whom? All my acquaintances have died, or have forgotten me; but stop, my good Sir! I now remember one, how should I not have a friend, to be sure I have one!” exclaimed the old man suddenly. “I am on friendly terms with the President, he used to visit me often in bygone years, how should I not know him, or he me! we were like wheels of the same carriage, always together, up to any mischief! how should we not know one another? he is my best friend! would you advise me to entrust him with this business?”

"I advise you most certainly to do so," replied Tchichikoff.

"Then I will write to him, because he is a very intimate friend of mine! indeed, now I remember it, our friendship dates from our childhood, we were intimate schoolfellows."

And suddenly over this wooden parchment-like face a warm flush passed, but it did not express feelings of a pleasant recollection, no, only something like a faint shadow of real feeling, an apparition similar to the unexpected appearance of a drowning man above the surface of the water, who causes a shout of joy among the crowd gathered along the shores. But unavailingly do his suddenly rejoiced brothers and sisters throw out cords and ropes to his assistance, hoping to see once more his head, or outstretched hands, trying to seize it—alas! it was his last re-appearance. All is silent, and the now silent and smooth element becomes but more ominous and terrifying. Something analogous was also visible in the expression of Pluschkin's features, after a momentary flush of sensibility, the expression of his face became but more unfeeling and repulsive.

"There was a sheet of note-paper lying on the

table," he said, " but I wonder what has become of it ; you have no idea how impudent my servants are !"

Hereupon he began anxiously to look about, under the table, upon the table, stirring about everything, but at last, not being able to find it, he shouted as loud as he could :

" Mavra ! halloa, Mavra !"

Upon this call, a woman servant entered the room, holding a plate in her hands, upon which lay the well-known Easter-cake of his daughter Alexandra. The following conversation took place between them :

" You magpie ! tell me immediately where you have put the sheet of note-paper, that was lying here upon my table ?"

" Good Heavens, Sir, do not be alarmed, but I really have not seen it, excepting a small piece with which you covered a wine-glass the other day."

" I see clearly by your eyes and countenance that it is you who have surely taken it."

" For what purpose should I have done so ? It could have been no use whatever to me, for I cannot read nor write."

" 'Tis a falsehood, you have taken it and

carried it to your cousin, Karpuschka, the carpenter, I know him to be a scribbler and of course you have given it to him."

"That I have not, and besides if my cousin wanted some paper, he has the means to buy it, for he is a good workman and can earn sufficient to pay for it. No, it is not he who has your paper."

"Mind what you are saying and doing, for on the day of judgment the demons will torment you, yes it is with iron rods that they will scourge you! you may depend upon it they will punish you for your wickedness in this world!"

"But why should they scourge me, when I never even touched your slip of paper? I may, perhaps, like other women, have my faults, but I have never been accused of theft before."

"The demons are sure to scourge you, and say besides: 'that is what you deserve you wicked woman for betraying and deceiving your lawful master, yes, it is with red-hot iron rods that they will torment you!'"

"And I shall proclaim my innocence," added the poor woman crying, "I shall invoke Heaven and declare that I did not touch or take any of your property. And here it lies upon the

table. You always scold and accuse us though we are innocent !”

Pluschkin now really beheld the note-paper before him, and for a moment he stopped short, whilst chewing with his lips, then he added :

“ Well, why are you so excited ? what a talkative woman you are to be sure ! Scarcely have I spoken a word to you, when you are ready with ten answers ! Go and fetch me a light to seal my letters with. But no, stop, you are sure to lay hold of a tallow candle, grease melts : it will be a loss ; bring me a pine-torch.”

Mavra left the room, Pluschkin seated himself in an arm-chair and taking a pen up, he kept turning the sheet of note-paper for a considerable time in his hand, thinking at the time, could it not be possible to save the half or a portion of the paper, but at last he felt convinced that it was an impossibility ; he therefore dipped his pen into the ink-stand and into a mouldy fluid, at the bottom of which there were numerous dead flies, he began to write ; his letters were very much like music-notes, he was obliged to stop at each pen stroke, for his hand shook and trembled violently over the

paper, and the progress of his writing and increase of lines was very slow indeed, for he could not help thinking and regretting, that much of the paper before him would have to remain unwritten upon.

And to such a degree of meanness and degradation could a well-born man degenerate! undergo such a change! But is this like truth, like reality? All approaches truth and reality, for a human being is liable to undergo incredible changes. The youth of this day would start back horrified if the portrait of his old age could be shown to him. Oh! gather on our way—as you leave your downy pillow to start and enter into harsh and hardening manhood—gather up all the tender impressions of human nature, do not leave them behind you—do not pick them up later! Harsh and frightful is such old age when looming in the future, for it indemnifies for nothing! The grave is more merciful, upon a tombstone may be written: here lies a man! but you can read nothing upon the cold, unfeeling features of pitiless age.

“Do you perhaps know any one among your friends—” said Pluschkin, whilst folding up his

letter, "who might stand in want of a few run-away serfs?"

"Ah, you have even some run-away men?" demanded Tchichikoff eagerly, but composing himself again quickly.

"Yes, unfortunately, I have some. My son-in-law has been hunting after them, but he assured me, that he has lost the trace of them notwithstanding his diligence and perseverance, however, he is a military man, accustomed to do business on horseback, if he had taken the trouble to apply to the various courts and—"

"Pardon me for interrupting you, but how many are they in number?"

"Well, as near as I can guess about seventy."

"No, is it possible?"

"By Heavens, it is as I tell you! With every new year I find that more and more of my men run away. My people are one and all awful gluttons, from good living and easy tasks they are apt to burst like the frog in the fable, whilst I have scarcely sufficient to eat myself. Really, I should feel disposed to accept any reasonable offer for them. Pray, speak to your

friend about them : let us suppose he only recaptures ten of them, and his trouble will be amply rewarded. And you must not forget to tell him that our census serfs are worth five hundred silver roubles a-piece everywhere."

"No, my good old man, don't you believe it; this piece of news my friend shall not even be allowed to dream of," thought Tchichikoff to himself; and then he added aloud, "That it was a perfect impossibility to find such a friend; that the trouble and expense of recapturing run-away serfs would exceed by far their collective value; because it would be madness to apply to any court of law for assistance, for it is well known that if a man enters a court of justice in Russia, he generally has to leave, if not his own liberty behind him, at least his property, without the exception of the very coat on his back; but if he was really embarrassed for a little money, he would do himself pleasure by proving him his sincere sympathy, and that he was ready to make an offer; but as it was a mere trifle, it would be really idle even to mention a word about it."

"Pray, and how much could you offer me?" demanded Pluschkin, with the anxiety and eagerness of a real Shylock, his hands trembling like quicksilver.

"I could afford to pay you at the rate of twenty-five copeks in silver for each of your run-aways."

"And how do you propose purchasing them—will you pay ready money?"

"Yes, I am prepared to pay immediately."

"My good and dear Sir, pray don't be hard with an old man; be generous and just; pay me at least forty copeks a head."

"Most estimable man!" exclaimed Tchichikoff, "I would not only have paid you forty copeks, but even would have been glad to pay you five hundred roubles for each run-away vagabond. It would have been a gratification to me to offer you such a sum, because I see it plainly now, that you, my worthy and excellent old Sir, are suffering from the effects of your own misplaced benevolence."

"By Heavens, it is so! By Heavens, you spoke the truth!" exclaimed Pluschkin, bending down his head and shaking it sorrowfully.

"All from benevolence!"

“ You will agree with me, my excellent old man, that I at once knew how to appreciate your character. And why should I, therefore, not give you five hundred roubles for each of these serfs? but, the fact is, I am not possessed of a large fortune; however, to be agreeable to you, I am ready to make an addition of five copeks, so that, in this manner, every serf will cost me the round sum of thirty silver copeks.”

“ Make another effort, for the power lays in your hands; give me but two copeks more above the thirty.”

“ So I will, if you wish it, I'll give you two copeks more. How many have you of those run-away rascals? You told me, I believe, seventy in all?”

“ There are a few more. In all, they number seventy-eight.”

“ Seventy-eight! Let me see, seventy-eight and thirty-two copeks a head, that makes—” Hereupon our hero only took one moment for consideration, and then continued deliberately: “ That makes a total of twenty-four roubles ninety-six copeks.” He was a clever arithmetician.

After this clever calculation, he made Pluschkin write out a receipt in form, and paid him the receipt in full upon the table, which the other took up in both hands, and carried towards his desk, with as much anxious precaution as if he was carrying some precious liquid, fearing every moment lest he might spill some of it.

When he had arrived before his desk, he once more covered his money with an ardent look, and then he laid it as carefully into one of his secret drawers, where, no doubt, it was destined to lie buried until Father Carp and Father Policarp, two worthy popes of his village, would come and have to bury the wretched man himself, to the indescribable joy of his daughter and son-in-law, and perhaps, also, to the great satisfaction of the always hungry Captain, who had succeeded in establishing a relationship with the old miser.

After having hidden his treasure, Pluschkin returned to his arm-chair and sat down; it seemed that he now was completely at a loss of a subject for conversation.

"Do you already intend to leave me?" said he, as he happened to perceive a slight move-

ment which Tchichikoff made, and which was only for the purpose of taking his pocket-handkerchief from his pocket.

This question reminded our hero that really there was no reason or inducement for him to stay any longer with the old miser.

"Yes, it is high time for me to depart," said he, whilst taking up his hat.

"Won't you really stay and take a cup of tea?"

"No, thank you; I think we had better leave it till the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you."

"Why, I have given orders for the tea-urn to be heated. For my own part, I must confess, I am not at all partial to tea-drinking, like the rest of our countrymen; the beverage is very dear, and besides, sugar has risen to a most unmerciful price. Proschka! I don't want the samovar; take the cake back again to Mavra, mind you understand me rightly; tell her to put it on the same shelf where she took it from; but no, stop—leave it on the table; I think I shall take it back again myself."

"Farewell, then, my dear Sir, the Almighty

bless and keep you. As for the letter to the President, do not forget to give it him immediately on your return to Smolensk, as well as my kindest regards. Yes, let my dear old friend read it; I know he will be pleased to hear from me. How should he not recollect me? we used to live together, like two wheels of the same carriage."

After this, that ancient apparition, the worn-out old miser, led his guest the same road back on which he had entered his house, and saw him into the court-yard, and safe into his carriage, but as soon as the britchka had passed the gates, he ordered them to be closed immediately; he then made a turn of inspection around his extensive premises, with the view of convincing himself that the watchmen were all on their guard, for he had posted sentinels at every available corner; these poor fellows kept thumping with a large wooden spoon against the bottom of small empty casks, instead of upon iron plates.

Being satisfied that every one was doing his duty, he entered the kitchen, under the pretence that he came there to convince himself that the food of his servants was good and eatable, and

thus tasting of everything, he stuffed himself with cabbage and porridge to his heart's content; he then scolded them all, down to the scullery-maid, reproached them with bad conduct, and, after having done this, he quietly returned to his own room.

When he found himself alone, he began to think how he could manage to mark his sense of gratitude to his amiable guest for an act of such unheard-of generosity.

"I think I shall present him," thought he to himself, "with my watch. It is a good one, a silver lever one, not one of those common Geneva or pinchbeck watches. I remember it is rather a little out of repair; but what does that matter? he can get it repaired himself. He seems a young man yet, and of course he wants a watch—it will help to please his sweet-heart.

"But no," added he, after musing for a while, "I think I shall leave him the watch as a legacy after I am dead; then he will be sure to remember me."

CHAPTER V.

OUR hero, however, felt happy and in the best disposition of mind without the old man's watch. For such an unexpected acquisition of stock was in his opinion a most valuable gift, and he had really every difficulty in mastering his joy ; but then it was also one of the most advantageous speculations—though certainly of an unheard-of nature—that he had ever made in his life. He got for a mere nothing, not only dead, but even run-away serfs, in all more than two hundred regular census slaves, and to him, whether dead or alive, most valuable beings.

As a matter of course, it must be ac-

knownedged that whilst driving up to Pluschkin's mansion, he had a secret presentiment that something unusual would happen to him ; but certainly he was far from guessing that such a brilliant success would actually crown his anticipations.

Twilight began to merge into darkness of the evening, when the britchka approached the town. The crepuscule was mingling with the dusk quicker and faster, and it seemed as if objects in the distance were mixed up and in confusion. The red and white-coloured turnpike gates seemed of an indefinable colour, very different from their usual gay appearance ; the mustachios of the sentinel on duty seemed to be on his forehead, much above his eyes, as for his nose, it appeared as if he had none.

The sudden noise and the jolting of the wheels across the pavement were an undeniable proof that the britchka had safely entered the gates of Smolensk.

The britchka soon after sustained a few more severe joltings and shakings, until at last it made a regular jump as if into a hole ; fortunately it stopped short before the gates of the inn where Tchichikoff was met by his

servant Petruschka, who, with one of his hands was trying to keep together the skirts of his long surtout, not wishing perhaps that they should be open and flying about, whilst, with the other hand, he assisted his master to alight from the britchka.

The head-waiter had rushed forward to meet Tchichikoff. He held a candle in his hand and a napkin thrown over his shoulder. It is impossible for us to tell whether Petruschka was pleased or not to see his master returning safely home. However, he exchanged a familiar glance with his friend Selifan, in consequence of which, his usually sulky countenance for the nonce, seemed to undergo a change which bore some slight approach to cheerfulness.

"Your glory has been on a long excursion this time," said the head-waiter politely, as he was showing him up-stairs.

"Yes, rather," answered Tchichikoff, when he had arrived at the landing leading towards his room. "Well, and how are you?"

"Thank heavens and your glory for your kindness!" replied the head-waiter, bowing lowly in acknowledgment of the condescension. "A cornet in the Lancers arrived last

night, and has taken number sixteen, the apartment next to that of your glory's."

"Who? a cornet! of what regiment?"

"I really cannot inform your glory to what regiment he belongs, but he comes from Rizan, has a splendid carriage and three beautiful horses."

"Very well, that will do; go and behave yourself well in future," said Tchichikoff. But as he crossed the ante-room, he quickly turned up his nose, and said to Petruschka, whilst hurrying along, "You ought at least to have opened the windows, you careless fellow!"

"I have had them opened, your glory," replied Petruschka; but in saying this, he told a falsehood, and though his master knew well enough that he was trying to impose upon him, he did not condescend to waste another word about it. After the fatigues of his journey and adventures, he felt exceedingly tired, and was anxious to retire. He ordered a very light supper to be brought up, which consisted of a few thin slices of tender sucking-pig, which he ate rather hastily, and then undressing himself quickly, he went to bed immediately, and tucked himself well up in his blankets, and was soon

fast and sound asleep. He began to snore most wonderfully, and slept as soundly as only those happy mortals sleep who do not suffer from the attacks of gout or flies, nor from any superabundance of mental faculties.

CHAPTER VI.

TCHICHIKOFF was just awaking, and stretching out his hands and legs like a man preparing for gymnastics, he also began to be aware that he had slept uncommonly well. After lying for about two minutes longer thus outstretched upon his back, he suddenly smacked his fingers in the air, for he at once distinctly remembered, and with a face radiant with satisfaction, that he now possessed nearly four hundred serfs, a stock worth about half a million of silver roubles.

After these satisfactory reflections, he jumped gaily out of bed, and did not even think of looking at his face, for which he had a parti-

cular affection, and in which, as it seemed, he thought his chin was the most attractive feature, because he had the habit of passing his hand frequently over it when in the presence of any intimate friend; he did this particularly when he had been shaving in the morning.

“Just look here,” he used to say, whilst stroking it gently with his hand, “behold what a chin I have got—perfectly round and smooth!”

But this time, he examined neither his chin nor his face, but directly, such as he was, he got into his red morocco-leather morning boots, richly embroidered with silk of a variety of colours, for the manufacture of which the ancient Tartar town of Kazan is so justly celebrated; and thanks to his Russian constitution, that heeds no temperature, just as he was, with nothing but his night-shirt on, in the real Scotch fashion, he forgot for a moment his sedate character and middle age, and executed two regular jumps round his room, touching himself, very cleverly indeed, twice with the soles of his feet.

The very next moment, he immediately sat down to attend to his business; as he was thus

seated before his dressing-case, he rubbed his hands cheerfully for a moment—just as they would be rubbed by a honest and incorruptible judge when he is about to sit down to a luncheon before pronouncing his judgment in court; after having done this, Tchichikoff produced at once his papers and documents.

He was anxious to settle his affairs in Smolensk as speedily as possible, and leave nothing undone which could be attended to on that very day. He determined upon drawing up the contracts of sale himself; to write down and copy everything with his own hand, so as not to have to pay a copek to any of the government *employés*. He was perfectly familiar with the particular style and lawful forms of such documents; and he, therefore, with a bold hand wrote down in large characters, one thousand eight hundred and forty such a year, then immediately lower, but in much smaller characters, councillor of state, gentleman, so and so; in fact, all was done and written as it ought to be, and in two hours later his work was accomplished.

When he once more cast a glance over the various documents with the names of the serfs

on them, who had at one time been real slaves, working, tilling, drinking, cheating their master, and perhaps also simply honest serfs, it was then that he felt a strange and incomprehensible sensation suddenly overcome him.

Each of the lists possessed, as it were, a distinct character, and through that fact, it seemed again that each serf named upon them assumed also an individual character. The serfs who formerly belonged to the widow-lady, Koro-botchka, had nearly all nicknames attached to them. The note of old Pluschkin distinguished itself by its brevity of construction ; many of the names were only indicated by the first two letters of the christian and family name, and then followed two points, or rather blots.

Sobakevitch's list attracted his special attention by its unusual fullness and minuteness ; not one of the various qualifications of any one of his serfs had been omitted ; one of them had been noted down as a "clever joiner," to the name of another the following was appended, "a sharp fellow, eats no tallow." Particular *nota benes* were also made who their father, and who their mother had been ; only one in-

dividual of the name of Phedot was distinguished thus, "father unknown, but was born of a girl in the house, of the name of Capitolina, good principles and no thief."

All these particulars had a peculiar appearance of reality; it seemed to Tchichikoff himself, as if these poor dead serfs were alive yesterday. He kept looking for a long time at their names, until he felt his heart melting, as it were, to a feeling of pity, and heaving a deep sigh, he exclaimed:

"Good heavens, how many there are of you, to be sure! Poor fellows, I wish you could tell me, what you have been doing during your existence! How have you been battling your way through this world of woe?"

And his eyes rested involuntarily upon the, to us, already familiar name of Peter Saveliëff Neuvashaikorito, who once had been the property of Lady Korobotchka. And again he could not forbear making the observation:

"What a rich name to be sure, he takes a whole line all to himself;" and he then continued, "when among the living, were you a clever fellow in your profession, or simply a

clumsy mouzhik ; and were did you meet your death-blow? Was it in a dram-shop, or on the high road, or were you surrounded by those dear to you by the ties of nature? Stephen Korobka, joiner, a sober and steady man. Ah ! here he is, Stephen Korobka, that is the fellow, who, according to Sobakevitch, would have been a giant in the Imperial Life-Guards ! No doubt the poor fellow wandered about in obscurity with a hatchet on his side, and his boots across his shoulders, making his meals at the slender expense of one copek for brown bread, and two for dried fish, whilst, on returning home from his yearly work, he would bring with him a purse stuffed with silver roubles, and perhaps have some bank notes sewn up between the lining of his shirt or boots—where are you now? Have you, anxious for larger profits, been even as far as Moscow, and elevated yourself as high as the spire of Ivan Veliki, and tried to ring the changes on an Easter-night, but unsuccessfully fallen to the ground, whilst some more clever fellow than yourself standing close by would scratch himself behind the ear, and say : ‘ poor Stephen,

can't you stand the noise?' and coolly take your place.

" Maxim Teliatnikoff, shoemaker — shoemaker. Oh, ah, a shoemaker! 'drunk like a cobbler,' says our proverb. I know you, know you well, my fine fellow; if you like, I can tell you in a few words your own history; you were brought up to your trade by a native from Germany, who fed you at the same table, and beat your shoulders with the same strap to punish you for your own neglect and carelessness, and kept you at work and strictly in doors; at that time you were really an excellent fellow, but not a cobbler, and your German master thought that he could not praise you enough in the presence of his wife or friends. But when you had finished your apprenticeship, you said to yourself: 'now I will keep a strap myself, and not have to scrape together, one by one, the copper copeks as my German master used to do.' Thinking thus, you contrived to pay your yearly impost to your lawful master, and were allowed to remain in town and set up in your profession. You succeeded so far well enough, for you happened to obtain numerous

orders by way of encouragement, and you sat down to your work. Some wretched tanner supplied you with rotten leather, three times cheaper, it is true, than you could have bought a good material for; and really for a short time you even succeeded in making double profit upon each pair of boots you sold; but in about two weeks later, the boots of your manufacture were completely worn out, and you were called by your customers all sorts of names. In consequence of this mode of dealing, your shop was soon deserted by them, and by yourself; because you took to drinking and rolling about the streets, whilst in your state of intoxication you would often exclaim: 'No, really there is no consolation in life! we Russians cannot make a decent living, these foreigners push themselves forward everywhere, they positively take the very bread out of our mouths!'

"What peasant have we here? Elizabeth Vorobei. What a shame! a woman! how has she got among the men? He is a thorough cheat, that fellow Sobakevitch, even here he has tried to take advantage over me!"

Tchichikoff was right, it was really a woman. How she had slipped among the men,

it was quite impossible to tell, but certainly it was done very cleverly, for the woman might at a first glance have easily been taken for a man. However, he did not take the imposition in good part, and struck the name from the list at once.

“Gregory Dogeschainedogedish! What sort of a man have you been, I wonder? Were you perhaps one of those carriers by profession, driving your gallant troika from town to town, and fair to fair, bidding a long farewell to your family and friends to go and lead a wandering life in the service of some travelling tradesman between Russia and China? Did you surrender your soul to Heaven on the high road, or were you carried to your last resting-place by your village kindred, and your mourning wife and children?

“And you, my fine fellows?” he continued, as he cast a glance over the list of run-away serfs belonging to Pluschkin.

“Although you may be alive, yet where is the advantage of possessing you? you are as worthless as your dead brethren, and Heaven only knows whither your swift feet have borne you? Were you really so ill-used by old

Pluschkin that you thought it better to run away, or were you naturally inclined to become vagabonds, and now plunder travellers on the high road and in the forests? Are you perhaps incarcerated in some gloomy prison, awaiting your sentence, or have you become the property of a new master, and are at this moment tilling the land of another lord?

“Jeremy Kariakin, Nikita Volokita, and Antony Volokita his son; these fellows, I presume, were excellent run-aways, if I am to judge by the first and classical syllables of their name. Some one of you, I can have no doubt, has had the misfortune to fall into the hands of what you call in the country the Capitän-Ispravnik, who, as a gentleman strictly looking after passport regulations, has no doubt cross-examined you on the subject, and perhaps in the following terms:

“‘Whose serf are you?’ said he, perhaps, in his imperative voice, whilst interspersing his question with a few strong and fitting terms.

“‘I am the serf of such and such a nobleman,’ you will have answered boldly.

“‘Why are you here?’ demands again the military Capitän.

“ ‘I have received my due permission to go and search for work in town,’ is again your bold reply.

“ ‘And where is your passport?’

“ ‘With my landlord, the citizen Pimenoff.’

“ ‘Send for Pimenoff immediately. Are you Pimenoff?’

“ ‘I am Pimenoff.’

“ ‘Did this man give you his passport?’

“ ‘No, your glory, he has given me no passport of any description.’

“ ‘How dare you tell me a falsehood?’ says the Capitän-Ispravnik, adding, meanwhile a few strong and suitable terms:

“ ‘Just so,’ is your bold reply to this observation, ‘I did not give it to him because I returned home late, but I gave it for safe keeping to the bell-ringer, Antip Prochoroff.’

“ ‘Send for the bell-ringer! Did he give to you his passport?’

“ ‘No, Sir, I did not receive a passport from him.’

“ ‘Why, that is another falsehood,’ says the military Capitän, strengthening his affirmation with a few more impressive words. ‘Now, can you tell me where your passport is?’

“‘I am sure I had a passport,’ you said quickly, ‘but it seems I have lost it somewhere on the road.’

“‘And how do you account for the possession of this soldier’s cloak?’ demands again the Capitän-Ispravnik sternly, whilst adding again a few strong and fitting terms, ‘why have you robbed the imperial servant of his garb? and why have you dared to plunder the Pope’s coffer of his coppers?’

“‘I’m innocent,’ you say boldly, ‘I have never yet been convicted of theft.’

“‘And how is it that they have picked you up drunk and incapable, and clad in this cloak?’

“‘I really can’t say; no doubt some one else has put it on me.’

“‘Ah, you are a rogue and a vagabond,’ speaks the Capitän-Ispravnik, shaking his head at you, and putting his hands to his sides. ‘Guards, put the fellow in irons, and lead him away into the darkest dungeon.’

“‘Very well, your glory, I submit myself with pleasure,’ is your polite reply.

“And hereupon you produce your snuff-box, and treat with its contents, and in the most

friendly manner, the two invalids who are putting the chains on your legs, asking them coolly how long ago they were discharged from their hard service in the army, and in what battles they have fought. And now you continue to live some time in prison, until due inquiries are made about you, and your case properly and leisurely investigated.

“ At last, the following decision arrives : the run-away serf, Nikita Volokita, will be transferred from the prisons of Zarevo-Kokaisk to the prison of Mosaisk, from there a fresh order transfers you again to the prison in Vesegonsk, and thus you continue to be transferred from dungeon to dungeon, and you say to yourself as you inspect your new habitation :

“ ‘ I don’t know, but somehow I like Vesegonsk better than any of the other places ; the place is larger and cleaner, and the company here much gayer ! ’

“ Abakum Phiroff ! and what are you ? where and in what part of the vast Empire could you now be met with ? Have you gone down the river Volga and taken a fancy to an agitated life on the swelling waves, and joined some of the gay river men ? ” —

Saying this, Tchichikoff stopped short and began to muse and reflect. What might he have been thinking about? Did he try to imagine the fate of Abakum Phiroff, or did he plunge into reflections like any other Russian, whatever his age might be, no matter of what rank or fortune, when he reflects upon the broad road of human life?

And in truth where is Phiroff now? He wanders boisterously and gaily along the rich shores of the Volga; he has hired his services to some travelling merchant. Flowers and ribbons ornament his peculiarly shaped hat; he seems now as cheerful and contented as any of his comrades born and bred to that peculiar life; they are just bidding farewell to their wives and sweethearts—tall, active, and healthy women, looking as picturesque as the men, in their wide frocks and flowing tresses mixed with gay ornaments and coloured ribbons; songs with and without choruses, and again interrupted, but a solo or an accompaniment of the national guitar or balalaika is to be heard all along the piers and shores. The bustle and life among the people assembled is now at its height, for they are completing the cargo of their barges, into

which they store the last sacks, containing wheat, barley, oats and other grains, which the fertile soil in that part of the country so abundantly produces.

Along the shores are yet hundreds and thousands more sacks filled with various grains, heaped in columns and towering like Egyptian pyramids into the air, and ready to be shipped as soon as the warm rays of the spring can burst the melting ice, and allow this bread-stuff arsenal to drift down the river, barge following barge like a band of swans when proudly floating down the rapid stream.

Such is the occupation of our Russian rivermen on the shores of the Volga, where he has hard work, but where he leads a comparatively independent and cheerful life, and where his gay and melodious songs are heard from the source to the efflux of that magnificent river.

CHAPTER VII.

"HOLLOA, he! twelve o'clock," Tchichikoff said at last, looking at his watch, "how could I so utterly forget myself? if at least there had been any business-like result in these reflections, but as it is, it was but folly and nonsense!"

Saying this, he changed his highland costume for a more becoming one, buckled tighter up his full stomach, perfumed his face and hands with some Eau de Cologne, put his warm travelling-cap in his hand, and the various documents under his arm and hurriedly left the inn, hastening towards the government offices to conclude his contracts.

He did not hasten for fear of being too late;

oh, no, he was not afraid of being too late, because the President of the Council was now his intimate friend, and could prolong or shorten the sittings in the court at his own convenience ; he was as powerful in his office as Homer in his classical poems, who lengthened his days and sent tempestuous nights when he wished to shorten the quarrels of his favourite heroes, or allow them to fight out their differences.

With our hero it was different, he felt an inward longing to terminate his business as quickly as possible ; until he had done so, he would be sure not to feel either tranquil or comfortable, because the reflection occurred to him, that the serfs were not a positive reality though he had a point of law in his favour, and that under such peculiar circumstances it is always prudent to hasten the conclusion as quickly as possible.

But scarcely had he walked a short distance in the street, and whilst musing on the subject of his errand, covered as he was in a large coffee-coloured travelling cloak, he could not avoid running, as he was just on the point of turning round the corner, against a gentleman also dressed in a large coffee-coloured travelling

cloak and huge cap to match it covering his head and ears.

This gentleman could not repress an exclamation of joyful surprise at the sight of Tchichikoff, for it proved to be his friend Maniloff. They sank at once into each other's arms, and remained in that position, firmly clasped together, for more than five minutes in the middle of the thronged pavement. The exchange of their mutual affection was so tender and strong, that both suffered for the rest of the day from pains in their fore-teeth. Maniloff's gratification was so great, that actually nothing else but his nose and lips could be seen on his face; as for his eyes, they had literally molten away for joy.

For more than a quarter of an hour he held firmly clasped between his own Tchichikoff's hand, and by his affectionate pressure heated it to a considerable degree. In the most elaborate, elegant, and chosen terms, he assured his friend that he had hastened to town to embrace his dear Pavel Ivanovitch; his address was concluded with such compliments as might perhaps only be spoken to a young lady when she is led to a country-dance.

Tchichikoff opened his mouth without knowing what he was going to say in acknowledgment of such great civilities, when Maniloff suddenly produced from under his cloak a parcel of papers, rolled up in the shape of a tube, and tied together with a pink ribbon.

"What is that?" inquired Tchichikoff.

"The dead serfs, my dear Pavel Ivanovitch," replied Maniloff, with his usual honeyed smile.

"Ah!" he immediately untied and unfolded the papers, and cast a hurried glance over the lists and was pleasantly surprised at the neatness and accuracy of the writing.

"A beautiful hand-writing," said he, "it will be quite unnecessary for me to copy it over again. And even a beautiful black line like a frame around it! pray, and who has taken the trouble to draw these accomplished lines around it?"

"Pray do not ask me," said Maniloff.

"Yourself?"

"My wife."

"By heavens! I am really ashamed to have given you and your kind lady so much trouble, I am indeed quite ashamed!"

“For our own dear Pavel Ivanovitch, nothing is a trouble!”

Tchichikoff bowed deeply and civilly an acknowledgment. When Maniloff heard that his friend was on his way to the government offices for the purpose of concluding the formalities of the contracts of sale, he immediately offered to accompany him thither. The two friends joined their arms and went away together. At each indifferent, uneven, or broken flag-stone, Maniloff immediately and civilly assisted Tchichikoff to pass over, and in his anxiety, even nearly lifted him from the ground with his arm, adding at the same time, and with a pleasant smile, that he would not suffer his dear friend to hurt his little feet against any stone whatever. Tchichikoff felt really ashamed, not knowing how he could return the attention, because he was conscious that he was rather of a heavy weight.

While continuing to exchange civilities, they arrived at last upon a large and open square, where they beheld the Imperial government offices before them; the building was a very extensive one, three stories high, and painted

white, like chalk, no doubt a symbolic sign of the purity of the hearts of those *employés*, who were appointed to administer justice; the other buildings in the square were altogether out of proportion with the immense white house.

The most remarkable features in it were; a sentry's box, before which a soldier with his musket was walking up and down, several droschki-stands surrounded by their idle drivers, and at last a range of wooden walls, painted grey, and with their usual inscriptions and characters drawn on them, with either chalk or charcoal; there was really nothing else worth mentioning to be seen on this desolate, or as it would be called in Russia—handsome square.

From out of the windows of the second and third stories, now and then a few heads of the unimpeachable and incorruptible administrator's assistants would make a momentary appearance and then immediately draw them back again, no doubt because their President entered the room at the moment.

The two friends now entered the large building and found themselves before a wide

staircase, which they did not ascend, but rather scaled in a canter, because Tchichikoff was trying to escape the further assistance of Maniloff's arm, and therefore rushed quickly forward, whilst his friend Maniloff on the other hand, was also anxious to hasten forward in order to prevent Tchichikoff feeling tired from the ascension of the long flight of stairs. With these different objects in view, they both rushed madly as it were onward until they both met at the landing above, which ended in a sudden collision in a dark passage.

Neither the passage nor the interior of the rooms which they entered immediately after, in any way made a pleasant impression upon their sight as regards cleanliness. It is true also, that at that particular moment, neither of them was disposed to pay any attention to the circumstance; and all that which was wanting in order and cleanliness, was therefore left to remain dirty and disorderly just as it was, assuming not the least feature of attraction. The door-keeper of the offices received his guests in a shabby and inelegant costume, and opened the door to the new comers.

It would perhaps have been deemed desirable

to have a minute description of the various rooms through which our two heroes passed ; but the author must confess, that he has a particular repugnance for any and all places of justice in any country, but particularly so for those in his own country. And even, though it has happened to him to pass or rather wind his way through some courts of justice decorated in the highest fashion, and covered with carpets and marqueterie, and polished tables, yet he always endeavoured to hurry his steps as much as possible, while casting down his eyes, and therefore it is quite impossible for him to give any interesting description of the inner charms and attractions of the courts of justice in the Russian Empire.

Our heroes saw numerous piles of waste paper and of white paper, many downcast heads, broad shoulders, dress-coats, and imperial shape and even some common grey cotton jackets, which contrasted very strongly with the other colours ; some of these grey jacketed gentlemen had their heads bent all on one side, and nearly leaning on the paper, as if ready to fall asleep over their work, and yet they were busy scribbling, copying perhaps some

brief or inventory concerning a mortgaged estate, which the Crown was about to take possession of, because the righteous owner had been ruined or banished from the country.

At intervals, short exclamations could be heard pronounced in a subdued and often unpleasant tone of voice, such as: "Mr. so and so, will you give me the application of No. 777! You are in the continual habit of mislaying the cork of the imperial ink-bottle!"

Now and then the sounds of a voice speaking in a tone of importance was also heard, no doubt proceeding from a superior officer, and consequently in a more autocratic manner:

"Here, take that and copy it off immediately, if not, I shall order your boots to be taken off your feet, and you shall have to sit for six hours without a chance of eating anything."

The noise produced by the quills in operation was very great indeed, and resembled very much the noise produced by a carriage when passing through a forest across a road strewn with dry autumnal leaves.

Tchichikoff and Maniloff approached the first table they were near, and at which two

employés, rather young men, were sitting, and busying themselves in doing nothing, they addressed them in the following manner :

“Will you allow me to inquire, where the ‘contract of sale’ business is transacted in these offices?”

“And what is your business?” said both *employés* at once, whilst turning to the speaker.

“I want to hand in a petition concerning some contracts of sale.”

“And what is it you have been buying?”

“Before telling that, I should have liked to know first where the contract of sale department is—is it here or in another place?”

“You must first tell us what you have been purchasing and at what price, and then we shall tell you where you will have to apply to, but without knowing this we cannot advise you.”

Tchichikoff saw at once that curiosity only prompted them to address these questions to him, and that like all young men or *employés*, they wished to gratify their curiosity and give at the same time a greater importance to themselves and to their occupations.

"My good young gentlemen," said Tchichikoff, "I am perfectly aware that all contracts of sale, no matter at what price a bargain has been concluded, are settled and legalised at one and the same place, and if you don't know what is doing at your table, then we shall at once proceed to ask some one else."

The *employés* made no reply whatever to this observation, but one of them pointed with his fore-finger to the corner of the room, where an elderly man was sitting behind a table and stirring about in a heap of papers.

Tchichikoff and Maniloff passed through a long range of tables straight towards the old man. He seemed to be very seriously engaged with his occupation.

"Sir, will you allow me to ask you," said Tchichikoff with a bow, "whether this is the department or section for the conclusion of contracts of sale?"

The elderly *employé* lifted up his eyes and spoke abruptly in reply: "contract of sale business is not transacted here."

"And pray, where then?"

"In the section for the conclusion of contracts of sale."

"But where am I to find this section?"

"It is under the superintendence of Ivan Antonovitch."

"Could you perhaps tell me where I might find Ivan Antonovitch?"

The old man pointed with his forefinger to another corner of the extensive room. Tchichikoff and Maniloff hurried towards the seat of Ivan Antonovitch, who had espied them already with one of his eyes and scrutinized them now with the other, which having done, he immediately plunged again if possible still deeper into his occupation.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ALLOW me to ask if you please,” spoke Tchichikoff with a civil bow, “is this the section for the contracts of sale?”

Ivan Antonovitch appeared as if he had not heard the question at all, and busied himself as completely as possible among his papers without saying a word in reply. It was evident that this person was already a man of a sedate and serious age, and not at all like those two youngsters or madcaps. Ivan Antonovitch seemed to be already at some distance beyond forty years; his hair was black and abundantly covered his head; the centre of his face seemed to rush forward towards its extremity, the nose,

in a word, it was a face that would be called in ordinary Russian parlance, a muggy one.

"Allow me to ask you, Sir, if this is the department for the conclusion of contracts of sale?" Tchichikoff demanded again.

"Yes," answered Ivan Antonovitch, turning his muggy face towards the inquirer for a moment, and then immediately beginning to write again.

"My business is the following: I have purchased of several landed proprietors in this province a number of serfs with the intention of settling them elsewhere: the contracts of sale are prepared and now only require to be lawfully legalized."

"Are the contracting parties present?"

"Some of them are in town, others have sent their powers of attorney."

"Have you brought a written petition on the subject?"

"I have done so, Sir. I should have liked, that is to say, I would be very glad indeed to terminate this business as soon as possible. Therefore, could we not, for an instance, begin at once in order to finish all this very day?"

"Oh to-day! that is quite impossible," said

Ivan Antonovitch. "Due inquiries must be made in the first instance to ascertain if no objections could or would be raised in the matter."

"As regards this, and in order to speed the subject, I may inform you, Sir, that Ivan Gregorievitch, the president, is an intimate friend of mine."

"But allow me to observe to you, Sir, that Ivan Gregorievitch is not the only person who would have to attend to this matter; there are other persons as well," said Ivan Antonovitch dryly.

Tchichikoff caught at once the hint which Ivan Gregorievitch had dropped for his information, and said, "nor shall others have to complain of me, I have been in the civil service of our country myself, I know what business and promptitude means."

"Well, then I would advise you to go at once to the President," said Ivan Antonovitch, in a rather pleasanter tone of voice, "let him give his instructions to whom it concerns, and as for ourselves you may be assured that your business shall be attended to."

Tchichikoff produced a white bank-note from his pocket-book and laid it on the table before Ivan Antonovitch, which the other did not seem to see at all, but instantly covered with a large book. Tchichikoff was about drawing his attention to it, but Ivan Antonovitch with a peculiar nod of his head made him understand that it was perfectly unnecessary.

“That man will shew you into the President’s private office,” said Ivan Antonovitch, whilst making a sign to one of the *employés* to approach, who happened to be just in the way and no doubt ready to devote all his energies to the service of justice and his country, in which devotion he seemed to have even sacrificed his coat, if we were to judge by his two sleeves, which had burst at both elbows and which now displayed the lining to great advantage, and for which services and devotion of years such men are generally dismissed with a useless title or a paltry pension.

This man then joined our friends and served them like Virgil once assisted Dante, and led them through a long range of tables and rooms into the office of the President, where they saw

a lonely, large and comfortable arm-chair, in which and before a table and two huge books they beheld the President, radiant like the sun.

At this sight, the modern Virgil felt an inexpressible feeling of delight overcome him suddenly, so great and powerful indeed, that he would not dare to venture a step further but turned round immediately, and thus showed the back of his coat which was completely worn out and covered all over with down and feathers. When the two friends had entered the apartment they saw that the President was not alone ; behind him sat Sobakevitch, who was completely hidden by a large cheval looking-glass. The entrance of the two guests was hailed with an exclamation of joyful surprise, and the presidential chair was pushed back loudly. Sobakevitch also rose from his seat, and as he thus happened to be standing before the looking-glass, his huge figure and extensively wide and long sleeves of his coat loomed larger than ever.

The President most cordially embraced Tchi-chikoff, and the walls of the justice-room re-echoed their tender exchange of affection, they then civilly inquired after the respective state of

their health, and it proved that they were both suffering from pains in their loins, the natural consequence of a sedentary life and occupations.

The President seemed to have been already informed by Sobakevitch of Tchichikoff's purchase, because he now began to compliment him on the subject, which at first seemed rather to take our hero by surprise, especially when the idea occurred to him, that two of the contracting parties, namely Maniloff and Sobakevitch, with whom he had come to an understanding of mutual secrecy, were now standing opposite one another.

However, he soon recovered himself, and thanking the President for his civil inquiries, he immediately turned towards Sobakevitch and asked him politely.

"And how do you do?"

"Thank Heavens, I have no reason to complain," answered Sobakevitch. And really he had no cause of complaint; it would have been easier for a piece of pig-iron to catch a cold and begin to cough, than for this wonderfully constituted landed proprietor.

"True enough, you have always enjoyed an

excellent state of health," the President observed, "and I remember your late father, was as strong and healthy a man as yourself."

"Yes, he was in the habit of going bear-hunting all by himself," answered Sobakevitch.

"However, I am of opinion," said the President again, "that you could master a bear as well, if you liked to encounter one."

"No, I could not," Sobakevitch answered; "my late father was much stronger than I am;" and, after a deep sigh, he continued: "No, the men of our present day are not what they used to be formerly. Take me even for an example; what is my life and strength? I have just sufficient energy to bear my life."

"Why, what makes you complain of your life?" the President inquired again.

"It is not good or satisfactory!" exclaimed Sobakevitch, whilst shaking his head slowly. "Just judge yourself, Ivan Gregorievitch: I am at the beginning of my third score, and have not once suffered the slightest complaint or indisposition, not even from a cold. Now you will agree with me that this cannot be for the better. Some fine day will dawn when I shall have, no doubt, to pay dearly for this, my present state of health and life."

Hereupon Sobakevitch relapsed into what seemed a state of melancholy or hypochondria.

"What a strange fancy, to be sure," the President and Tchichikoff thought at the same time, "to be brooding on such a subject."

"I have a letter for you my dear President," said Tchichikoff, producing Pluschkin's letter, with the evident intention of changing the subject of their conversation.

"And pray from whom?" the President demanded, as he was breaking the seal; and, having done so, he exclaimed: "Ah! is it possible, from Pluschkin. He is still a wanderer on the surface of this world. What a strange fate, that man's is; for I must tell you, gentlemen, that he was one of the most accomplished, and wealthiest men I ever happened to know! and now——"

"A real dog," said Sobakevitch, "a rascal, who has starved the greater part of his serfs."

"Very well, and with great pleasure," said the President, when he had read the letter; "I am willing to be his representative and agent in the matter. When do you wish to sign the contracts, now or later?"

"Now, if you please," said Tchichikoff; "and

I shall even beg of you to transact all the business, if possible, to-day, because I wish to leave town to-morrow on some important affairs. I have brought with me the various documents—such as the contract of sale, the petition, and the list of names; in fact everything is ready.”

“All this is well and good,” said the President; “do as you please; but we do not intend to part with you so easily. The contracts shall be attended to, and signed this very day, on condition that you will consent to remain with us. I will give my instructions immediately,” continued the high officer of the crown, as he opened the door leading into the office, which was now crowded with *employés*, who, like the industrious bees, were gathered in heaps of a hundred, on the spot; if it was possible that so many of them could have found any real employment. “Ivan Antonovitch, is he there?”

“Here!” answered a voice from the interior.

“Send him to me!”

The muggy face of Ivan Antonovitch, already so familiar to us, soon after made its appearance before the President’s room, and he entered with a profusion of servile bowing.

"Take these papers, Ivan Antonovitch, all these contracts of sale must be—"

"By the bye, do not forget, Ivan Gregorievitch," interrupted Sobakevitch, "that we shall require witnesses, at least two for each contracting party. I would suggest that you should send at once to the Procurator, he is a regular holiday-man, and is sure to be at home—his public business is usually managed by his lawyer, Mr. Solotucha, the greatest sharp I ever met with in this world. The Superintendent of the Medical Faculties is also a holiday-bird, and likely to be at home, if he has not already gone to play cards somewhere; however, there are a great many more besides those two, and who live even nearer, for instance, Truchatchevitch, Beguschikin, all these people live free of expense in this wide world."

"Just so, exactly, you are perfectly right!" said the President; and he immediately gave instructions to some of his messengers to go in search of the parties just mentioned by Sobakevitch.

"I will also request you," added Tchichikoff, "to send for the attorney of a widow lady, with whom I have also concluded a trifling business.

Her agent is the son of the Proto-pope, Father Kyrila ; I am told he holds an appointment in your offices."

"To be sure we shall have him as well," said the President. "Everything shall be done to your satisfaction, but as for my *employés*, I must beg, nay even insist upon, your giving them no gratuity. I never suffer any of my friends to pay for anything."

Saying this, he immediately gave all the necessary instructions to Ivan Antonovitch, who seemed not to like the arrangements at all. The contracts of sale seemed to produce a very favourable impression upon the mind of the President, especially when he had glanced over them, and found that the purchases made by Tchichikoff amounted to nearly half a million of silver roubles. He kept looking for several minutes at Tchichikoff, straight into the eyes, with a feeling of great satisfaction, and then added, smiling :

"It is thus, then ! In such a manner then my dear Pavel Ivanovitch, you have made some valuable and important acquisitions indeed !"

"Yes, really, I have made some acquisitions," replied Tchichikoff, modestly.

"A good speculation, really—a capital undertaking!"

"Yes, indeed, and I must own that I am of opinion that I could not venture into a more profitable business. Whatever the opinion of the world may be, I opine that the aim of a man is never thoroughly defined, if he does not stand with a firm footing upon a solid foundation, and not upon any frivolous chimera of a youthful imagination."

Hereupon, he added in a few more strong terms, and in good time, his disapproval of the hot-headed liberalism of the present youthful generation. But it was remarkable that with all his clever reasoning, there was a slight irregularity in the usual calm and dignified tone of voice, as if he was at the same time whispering to himself, "Oh, my good fellow, how mercilessly you impose upon people!" He even did not venture to lift his eyes either to Sobakevitch or Maniloff, fearing to meet some peculiar expression in their faces or countenance.

However, his alarms were imaginary. Sobakevitch's face was perfectly devoid of any expression whatever, whilst Maniloff was perfectly captivated by his elaborate speech. He only

kept nodding his head approvingly, and throwing himself into that peculiar position into which an amateur of music would plunge when his favourite *prima donna* has surpassed even the notes of the violin, and sent forth a tone which the throat of a bird would have been incapable of articulating.

"But why don't you mention to our friend Ivan Gregorievitch," Sobakevitch interrupted at last, "what kind of acquisition you have been making? And you, my dear President, why don't you ask him what purchases he has been making? Excellent people, as valuable as gold. I must inform you that I have even sold him my old Micheeff, the coach-builder."

"No, really, have you sold that excellent fellow Micheeff?" the President inquired. "I remember now your coach-builder, Micheeff, very well—an excellent and clever artisan. He has often mended my droschki. But stop, allow me—how is this—I remember now, you told me that he was dead."

"Who! Micheeff dead?" said Sobakevitch, and nearly betraying himself. "It was his brother who died; as for the coach-builder, he

is perfectly alive and healthier than ever he was before. He finished the other day a britchka with which you might venture to travel in a canter to Moscow. I am of opinion that he ought to be appointed to work for the Emperor alone."

"Yes, truly, Micheeff is a very clever fellow indeed," said the President, "and I am even surprised that you could agree to part with him for any amount or consideration."

"Micheeff is not the only one. I have even sold Stephen Korobka, the joiner; Miluschkin, the potter; Maxim Teliatnikoff, the shoemaker—they are all gone, I have got rid of every one of them."

But when the President asked him why he had thus disposed of them, as they were all such clever and indispensable workmen on a country estate, Sobakevitch answered, whilst sawing his right arm in the air:

"Bah, I was attacked by a peculiar whim of mine, and I said to myself, I am determined, and will sell all these fellows, and thus, then, I got rid of them all on account of a fancy."

After this explanation, he allowed his head

to hang down, as if he was addressing inward reproaches to himself, and then he added again :

“ Though you see that I am already a grey-haired man, yet I must confess I am still deficient in wisdom.”

“ But allow me to ask you, my dear Pavel Ivanovitch,” the President said again, “ how did you purchase these serfs, without the land they were born upon ? is it with the intention of removing them from here ?”

“ Just so, for emigration.”

“ Ah, for emigration views, that is another thing. And pray for what part of the country ? if the question is not indiscreet ?”

“ To what part of the country—oh, ah, I shall take them into the government of Kherson.”

“ Oh, that is one of the finest provinces in the Empire !” exclaimed the President, and expressed his high praise of the excellency of the soil in that province, and the richness of its steppes. “ And have you sufficient land for the accommodation of your newly-acquired population ?”

"Just sufficient for comfortable distribution among my new serfs."

"Have you a fine flowing river, or a brook?"

"A river. However, there is also a large brook." Saying this, Tchichikoff involuntarily looked at Sobakevitch, and though the other remained as cool and indifferent as before, nevertheless it seemed to him as if the following was as it were, written in the expression of his face. Oh, what a falsehood! for it is not likely that you will have a river and a brook as well, when, perhaps you have not even a piece of land!"

CHAPTER IX.

WHILST a lively conversation continued to be carried on between the parties assembled in the President's office, the witnesses began to arrive one by one: among the earlier arrivals was a man already known to our reader, the winking Procurator; he was immediately followed by the Superintendant of the Medical Faculties, then came Truchatchevitch, Beguschikin, and all those whom Sobakevitch had enumerated as uselessly walking about on the face of the earth.

Many of them were total strangers to Tchichikoff, whilst the missing witnesses were easily supplied from the ranks of the *employés* in the offices, in fact there was rather a super-

fluity of them, for not only the son of the Proto-pope, Father Kyrila was present, but even the worthy old man himself. Every one of the required witnesses now began to sign their names on the various documents, not forgetting to append their rank or title. As for each individual signature, it was an original for itself as regards the execution of the letters which formed the names, and certainly it would have been very difficult indeed to find corresponding ones in the Russian alphabet.

The well-known individual, Ivan Antonovitch displayed considerable activity, and in a very short time, all the contracts of sale were duly booked and registered in the government ledger; according to the regulations, an impost of a half per cent was calculated on the whole, including the publication of the transaction in the "Ministerial Gazetteer," and at the conclusion of the business, Tchichikoff found that his expenses were but a mere trifle. The President even gave instructions, that one half only of the half per cent impost duty should be received from his friend; as for the other half, it was carried to the account of some other indifferent petitioner.

"And now," said the President, when all the business was concluded, "now, we shall only have to sprinkle a little wine and inaugurate your excellent and important enterprise."

"I am agreeable," said Tchichikoff. "I leave it entirely to you to fix upon the place and time. It would be sinful were I not to feel most happy to be agreeable in turn to such estimable company as all those around me ; yes, gentlemen, now is the time to uncork a few or more bottles of that excellent sparkling wine of our brothers in France."

"No, pardon me, you misunderstand the matter: for we will ourselves provide the sparkling entertainment," said the President, "we feel this to be an obligation, our duty. You are our guest; we are bound to regale you. Do you know, gentlemen, what I will suggest to you; whatever we do later, for the present I propose that we adjourn at once and all, just as we are, to the house of our friend the Commissioner of Police; he is a wonderful man amongst us; we need only give him a slight hint and pass the fish-market or a wine-cellar, and you may depend upon it that we

shall make a luncheon equal to a feast ! at the same time I may observe that we shall have an excellent opportunity for a nice game of whist or lansquenet."

Such a suggestion no one could possibly withstand. The witnesses felt a voracious appetite at the mere mention of the fish-market ; they all rushed to take their hats and caps, and the sitting of the court was adjourned. When they passed through the room in which Ivan Antonovitch, the muggy-face, was sitting, he bowed politely, and whispered to Tchichikoff :

" You have purchased serfs for nearly half-a-millions' worth, but rewarded my troubles with a lonely twenty-fiver."

" But what serfs !" replied Tchichikoff to this, also in an undertone ; " really useless, worthless people, not worth half the money."

Ivan Antonovitch, hearing this, felt at once convinced that the stranger was of a positive character and would give him no more.

" How much a-head did you pay for Pluschkin's serfs ?" Sobakevitch whispered into his other ear.

"And why have you put on the list that Vorobieff," said Tchichikoff, in reply to his question.

"What Vorobieff?" demanded Sobakevitch.

"I mean the woman, Elizabeth Vorobieff, it seems as if you even took some pains to pass her off as a man."

"I attempted nothing of the sort," said Sobakevitch, as he went to join the other guests.

The guests proceeded all in a crowd towards the house of the Commissioner of Police. The commander of the police-force of Smolensk, was really and without flattery a wonderful man. Scarcely had he been informed of what his friends expected from him, when he immediately called one of his satellites, a fine and quick young fellow in shiny boots, to whom he seemed to whisper but two words, and then added aloud: "You understand me?" and thereupon, whilst the guests were trying to spend a little while in the next room, in playing a game of whist; the following dishes made their successive appearance upon the table: three different kinds of sturgeon called respectively: osetra, beluga, and sewruga,

smoked and pickled salmon, fresh and preserved caviar, some cheese, smoked ox-tongues, and a variety of other fish dainties, made up the supplies from the fish-market.

Then were brought up additional supplies, furnished by the master of the house from his own kitchen ; a large pie, containing the head, cartilage and jaws of a sturgeon that must have weighed more than three hundred pounds, besides a variety of other minced tarts, baked in sweet oils and butter.

The Commissioner of Police was in some respects considered as the father and benefactor of the town. He was perfectly at home among the majority of the citizens, and was accustomed to visit their shops and the market-places as if they were his own warehouses. He generally sat—as the phrase goes—in his right place, and did his duty accordingly.

The majority of the tradesmen courted him particularly, because he was not proud ; and really, his condescension towards them was very great indeed, when we take into consideration his exalted position ; he stood as godfather to all their children, and attended every one of their evening parties, and though he made them pay

heavy fines, whenever he found an occasion, yet he did it so exceedingly cleverly, that they could not feel angry with him for doing his duty : he would tap them in a friendly manner, on the shoulder, and add a pleasant smile, treat them with an excellent cup of tea at his own house, promise them to call at their house or shop and play a game of draughts, inquire after everybody and everything ; ask them how they were satisfied with trade, and in fact, take a lively interest in all their concerns.

If he should happen to hear that one or the other of the children had caught a cold, or was otherwise indisposed, he would immediately attend upon him personally, and suggest a variety of remedies to cure him, in a word he was a clever man ! If he happened to drive about in his droshki, he was sure to make as many calls as he possibly could, and meanwhile drop a sly word to the one or to the other, and say :

“ Now then, master Micheitch, I think it high time for us two to have a hand at a game of cards, what do you say to that ? ”

“ Yes, Ivan Alexeitch,” answers Master Micheitch, good humouredly, whilst taking off

his cap, "I think it a favourable opportunity for us to have a game."

"Well, brother Elias Paramonitch, would you like to come and look at my trotter? I am ready to run a race with your horse I saw the other day; we will try them and have a trifling bet on them."

The merchant who was madly fond of race horses, but especially of trotters, smiled at the proposal with an unusual gratification, and whilst stroking his long beard he would say:

"Very well, Alexei Ivanovitch, we will try them!"

At such moments all idle bystanders would usually take off their caps and smile with inward satisfaction at each other, and appear as if they wished to say:

"Alexei Ivanovitch is an excellent, kind and good-hearted gentleman!"

In a word, he had succeeded in gaining universal esteem, and the opinion of all the merchants who knew him was, that if Alexei Ivanovitch once captivated a fellow, he never parted with him again.

The Commissioner of Police, when he perceived that the luncheon was ready on the table,

suggested to his guests that they should finish their game of whist afterwards, and all entered that room from which an agreeable and inviting perfume began to titilate the nostrils and stomachs of the guests, and into which Sobakevitch had already for some time been casting longing glances at an immense sturgeon which was lying on a side table, upon a large dish.

The guests tasted as a relish to sharpen their appetite, a *liqueur* of that dark olive colour, which is only seen in Siberian precious stones, and which are used in Russia for valuable ornaments only; having done so they approached the table from all sides with fork in hand, and began to display their choice of taste, or if we may say so, every one his character and inclination, in attacking the one, the fresh caviar, another, the large fish pie, a third, the cheese and so forth.

Sobakevitch left all the smaller dishes unnoticed, and betook himself at once to the large dish with the sturgeon upon it, and whilst the other guests were eating, talking and drinking, he had succeeded in the short space of a quarter of an hour, and without any great exertions in eating nearly the whole fish, so that when the

Police-master accidentally bethought himself of the fish, saying :

“By the bye, I wonder, gentlemen, how you will like this wonderful production of nature?” and then approaching the dish with fork in hand and followed by his guests, he found but the tail left of his wonderful production of nature.

As for Sobakevitch, he feigned not to notice it, but taking up a plate he coolly approached another dish with small fried fish upon it, and used his fork to pick up a few of them, as if he had no real appetite. After having thus quietly dispatched the sturgeon, Sobakevitch sat himself down in an easy chair, and neither ate nor drank any more, but like a cat, kept licking his lips and winking his eyes.

CHAPTER X.

THE first toast proposed after luncheon, was as our reader may easily and naturally imagine, to the health and prosperity of the noble landed proprietor from the government of Kherson ; then, to the welfare and happy settlement on his estate of his newly acquired peasants ; and last, not least, to the health of his intended spouse, the boisterous hip, hip, hurrahs, which followed the last toast, forcing a pleasant smile from the lips of our hero.

Immediately after his health had been drank, he was at once surrounded by every one present, one and all of whom begged and entreated him to prolong his sojourn in Smolensk for, at least, two weeks.

"No, no, Pavel Ivanovitch! say what you like, but give way to our persuasions, for you cannot deny our proverbs, and if you leave us you would but cool our huts—enter upon the threshold and retreat! No, no, you had better stop and spend your time with us! We will marry you if you like; what do you say to that Ivan Gregorievitch, shall we marry him?"

"We'll marry him, we'll find him a wife," his Excellency the President rejoined. "However much you might feel inclined to struggle with hands and feet against it, we are determined to marry you! No, excellent papa, there is no getting out of this, since you have fallen among us, you must not complain. We are not jesting with you."

"Well, gentlemen, why should I struggle, with hands and feet?" said Tchichikoff, smiling. "Matrimonial ties are not to be rejected thoughtlessly, provided the bride could be found."

"We'll find you a bride. How should we not? We shall find everything, all—whatever your heart may wish for."

"Ah! in such a case—"

"Bravo! he will stay!" was the general shout. "Vivat! hurra to our Pavel Ivanovitch Tchichikoff! Hip! hip! hurrah!" And all

approached him again to shake hands and touch glasses. Tchichikoff made his response to everybody. "Stop, stop, once more!" said those of a more lively disposition, and touched glasses again; they then assailed him for a third time, and touched glasses for a third time.

In a very short time afterwards they became all very gay and lively. The President, who was a most amiable man when in a cheerful disposition, embraced Tchichikoff several times and in the excess of his overflowing heart, said to him, "Oh, you are my darling—my mother!" and then he would smack his fingers at him, and begin to dance and sing around him.

After the champagne, they had some sparkling Hungarian wine, which considerably heightened the good-humour of the company. They had now entirely forgotten their game of whist; they were arguing loudly, shouting, singing and speaking of everything, not even excluding politics, nor the military preparations that were carried on already at that time with hostile intentions towards Turkey; which, as a matter of course, led them further on to express their mutual disapprobation of the Emperor's conduct, and which free expressions at any other

time they would have severely resented even from their children.

In this instance, they conversed freely and decided the most important questions of state, which would have considerably embarrassed even a Menschikoff and a Nesselrode. Tchichikoff never felt so happy and well-disposed as on this occasion, and fancied himself to be really a landed proprietor of the beautiful province of Kherson ; he began to speak of a variety of improvements ; on the system of English and American improvements in agriculture and machinery ; on the happiness and beatitude of two loving hearts, and even began to recite to Sobakevitch the verses of Werther to Charlotte, to which declamation the other could do nothing better than wink with his eyes, because, after the meal he had made of the sturgeon, he felt a great inclination for a doze.

Tchichikoff now began to feel that he was becoming rather too free and communicative, and therefore accepted the droshki of the Procurator. The coachman of the imperial gentleman proved to be a fellow of a sharp intellect, and displayed it on the road, for he did not guide his horses with both hands, but

contrived to do so with his left only, whilst with his right, he managed to help the gentleman to keep his seat on the equipage. In this manner, our hero drove home in a strange carriage, whilst a thousand stranger ideas kept continually crossing his mind. A fair bride, with golden hair, rosy cheeks with a mole on both, a splendid estate and villages in the fair province of Kherson, and a large fortune to match it. Selifan even received some sundry instructions concerning his new method of administration, to call together all the recently acquired serfs, and to pass them in review one by one, and show them the land and hut allotted to them in their new settlement by their noble lord and master.

Selifan listened silently and for a long while, but then he left the room, saying to Petruschka, "Petruschka, go and undress your master." Petruschka began to take off his boots, and his master succeeded in undressing himself properly; and after turning over several times in his bed, which in consequence creaked most unmercifully, he fell asleep, under the positive impression that he was a landed proprietor of the fair province of Kherson.

Meanwhile, Petruschka carried into the lobby the pantaloons and the snuff-coloured dress-coat with the brass buttons, and having spread them across a wooden stand, he began to whip and brush so well and much that the landing of the staircase was soon filled with a cloud of dust.

As he was on the point of taking the clothes off, he happened to glance down the landing and saw Selifan, who was returning from the stable; their glances met, and they at once understood one another as if by intuition. "Our master is fast asleep, now is our time to go and look about a little." To take the dress-coat and trowsers into the room was done in an instant, and immediately after Petruschka had rejoined his friend below, and both went out together.

Not a word was said about where they intended to go, and on the road they talked of the most indifferent subjects. Their walk was not a long one; they simply crossed the street and entered the house opposite to the inn; they then approached a low smoky glass door, which led, as it were, into a cellar, where they beheld a number of strange-looking people sitting around wooden tables; some were well shaved, others again wore their beard long, according to

the national custom ; some were dressed in a sheep-skin with the wool inside, others again simply in shirt-sleeves, and here and there a few in a common felt cloak.

What Petruschka and Selifan did there, we cannot say, but when they left the house in about an hour after they entered it, they made their appearance in the open street, arm-in-arm, preserving a strict silence, but helping and upholding one another most carefully, and cleverly avoiding each stone and turning. Hand-in-hand and holding each other strongly, they remained for more than a quarter of an hour at the foot of the staircase ; at last, being convinced that they were right, they began the ascent, in which they succeeded to their mutual satisfaction after many exertions.

They now entered the room, and Petruschka stood musingly for a few minutes before his bedstead, which, as our reader may perhaps recollect, was of the most wretched description ; he was thinking how he should lie down in order to sleep with the greatest degree of comfort, at last he laid himself down perfectly across the bed, so that his feet rested upon the floor. Selifan laid himself down also upon the same

bed, but so that his head rested upon the stomach of his comrade, and thus forgot completely that he had no right to sleep in this room at all, but ought to have gone down in the lower hall or in his stable to watch his horses.

In this position they both fell immediately fast asleep, and began to snore as loudly and as deeply as any Russian bear could possibly snore; their deep notes were answered from the other room by their master, in a fine, nasal, steam-pipe whistle. Soon after, the whole of the establishment had sunk as it were into a magic slumber, with the exception, however, of one lonely window, in which a light was yet glimmering; this room was occupied by the lieutenant who had arrived with his own carriage and horses. According to the head-waiter's information, he came from Rizan, and was evidently passionately fond of boots, or he had already ordered four pair of Wellingtons and was now busily engaged in trying on the fifth pair.

He had already several times approached his bed with the evident object of laying down to his rest, but it was impossible—he could not

succeed ; the boots were too well-made, and he continued yet for a considerable time to look at and admire his boots, which were very well made indeed ; the heels especially seemed to keep his attention awake, because they were extensively high—according to the latest fashion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE purchases made by our friend Tchichikoff became the gossip of the day, and created a great sensation in Smolensk. The whole town conversed freely on the subject, opinions were given, and conclusions arrived at, whilst questions arose whether it was a good speculation to purchase serfs in the north, with the object in view of transplanting or settling them in the south.

Animated, as the majority of persons are by a spirit of contradiction, many pronounced themselves perfectly capable of enumerating all the advantages and disadvantages on the great undertaking of the stranger.

“Certainly,” said some one of them, “you are perfectly right on several points, and your argument is as clear as it is obvious, no objection can be raised against it: the soil in the southern provinces of the Empire, and especially near the Crimea, is very rich and productive; but his estate seems to be situated at some considerable distance from the Dnieper, which flows through our very town, and what is our friend Tchichikoff, and what especially are his serfs to do without a river? for you cannot deny it—he has no river.”

“Well, my dear Stephan Dmitrievitch, don’t excite yourself, for Heaven’s sake don’t, to be without a river is, after all, not so bad as you seem to imagine, allow me to tell you, that the process of emigrating and settling serfs, is by far the greatest difficulty. Is it not well-known what our serfs are? to transplant them as it were upon a fresh soil, and train them again to a foreign system of agriculture, is, in my humble opinion, a herculean task, besides you must not forget, that if the serf really arrives alive at his new destination, he generally finds nothing to shelter his head under, but has to build his own hut, though the cattle is found

for him. Add to all these disadvantages, and you know it as well as I, the desperate character of those fellows, and you will come to the conclusion, that if they take it in their heads to run away, you may but whistle after them, and this argument you must allow to be as clear and conclusive as that two and two make four."

"No, no, my dear Alexei Ivanovitch, allow me, pardon me, if I disagree with you on that point, that the serfs of Tchichikoff should take it into their heads to run away. The Russian is fit for everything, and can accustom himself to any climate. Send him even to Siberia or Kamtchatka if you like, but give him only a pair of leather gloves and his hatchet, and you may depend upon it that he will clasp his fist, and build himself another hut in no time."

"Allow me to tell you, Ivan Gregorievitch, that you have lost sight of a very important fact indeed: you have forgotten to inquire of what character Tchichikoff's new serfs are? You seem to forget that a wise owner will never sell a good, industrious, and valuable serf. I am ready to lay down my head upon the

block, if Tchichikoff's newly-acquired peasants are not one and all confirmed drunkards, and riotous people, and thieves and murderers in the bargain."

"Just so, exactly, I agree with you on this point; and I will allow that all Tchichikoff's slaves are confirmed drunkards, but we must also take into consideration, that in this very fact lies the moral, yes, I repeat it, in this fact lies the hidden moral, which has escaped your penetration; as you justly observed, they are all scoundrels now, but leaving their old abode, and settling in a different country, they might easily become most valuable subjects. Such instances and examples have been very frequent within our own country, as well as in other empires, nay, even history proves them."

"Never, never," said the Inspector of the Imperial Manufactories, "believe me, such things can never happen, because Tchichikoff's serfs are now going to encounter two formidable enemies: their first antagonist will be the close proximity of the Malo-Russian provinces, where, as you all well know, spirits of wine are sold duty free. I can assure you that in less than two weeks they will become like inner-soles

from pure drinking. Their other enemy is their natural disposition for idling and wandering about, which is sure to develope itself most powerfully during the progress of their emigration. Unless, indeed, Tchichikoff was to have them continually under his eyes, and was to keep them with a strong hand like a jamtchik his troika, scold them for the least trifle, not trust to anyone else but himself, be continually with and after them, and when occasion require it, treat them like our great Emperor Peter did, even with his generals, namely, give them a box in the ear, or a blow in the neck."

"But why should Tchichikoff take all the trouble to box their ears and face himself, he could easily meet with a trustworthy steward to manage his estate as well as his serfs."

"Oh, oh, find a trustworthy steward; but, my dear man, you forget that they are generally all scoundrels, and the real blood-suckers of the peasantry!"

"They are all rogues because of the indolence of the land owners, who will not take the trouble and look after their own interest."

"You are perfectly right;" re-echoed the majority. "If our proud and wealthy landowners

were only to know a little of their household interests and understand how to choose their confidants, matters would stand quite different in our holy Russia, and stewards would be honest men."

One of the gentlemen present who happened to be an imperial manager, hereupon said, that it was quite impossible to find a conscientious and honest manager for less than five thousand silver roubles a-year. But the President at once rejoined that such a virtuous man might even be met with at three thousand a-year.

But the manager boldly rejoined: "where could you find such a person? hanging about your elbows perhaps?" And the President in turn again replied: "he is not exactly hanging at my elbow's ends, but at any rate not far off from here, and if you like to know where, I can tell you that he lives in my very district, and his name is Peter Petrovitch Rasgerischin; and that is the very man that would suit our friend Tchichikoff as a manager for his estates and serfs."

Many entered feelingly into Tchichikoff's position, and the difficulties that would necessarily arise from the displacement of such a

large number of serfs, began to alarm them very seriously indeed ; in their apprehensions some of them went even so far as to predict the possible outbreak of a riot, especially as the thought occurred to them of what description the serfs of Tchichikoff were represented to be.

With reference to this latter contingency, the Commissioner of Police observed, " that it was foolish to anticipate a riot, because a few hundred peasants were about to emigrate, and admitting even that some slight disturbances were to happen, there existed the power of the Capitän-Ispravnik to stifle it in its very birth, and that if the Capitän-Ispravnik did not choose to attend to the matter in person, it would be quite sufficient for him to send his cap, which like the policeman in England, would be powerful enough to drive the rioters back to their duty and home in an incredibly short space of time."

Many others again offered their advice how the spirit of revolt—which in their wise opinion of the serfs of Tchichikoff, was sure to break out among them—could be repressed or prevented, especially when the poor fellows,

namely the serfs, were to be torn away from their native soil, and perhaps the bosom of their families.

The opinions and suggestions on this point were numerous and original ; there were some who advised rather stringent measures, all replete with military rigour, if not barbarity, at any rate of a very severe nature indeed ; however, there were also a few who advised kindness and compassion. The Postmaster observed, that he was under a sacred obligation, that it lay in his power to become a father to his slaves, to use his own expression ; introduce even among them the blessing of moral and physical emancipation and enlightenment, at the same time he did not forget to mention with great praise the Lancastrian system of mutual education.

It was in such a manner that the good inhabitants of Smolensk expressed themselves on the subject of our hero's enterprise, and many of them, overpowered by their goodwill towards him, even communicated their suggestions personally to him, and even went so far as to offer him the services of an escort,

for the safer conveyance of his serfs to their place of destination.

For their advice, Tchichikoff thanked them most cordially, saying, that if he should have occasion he would not fail to avail himself of their kind suggestions, but as for the proffered military escort, he declined it in the most positive terms, assuring them at the same time, that it would be perfectly unnecessary, as the peasants which he had bought were all of an extremely mild character, and that they felt a free and independent inclination to settle over in another country where they were sure to feel happy ; and that as to the anticipated riot, which his friends apprehended, he assured them that under such happy auspices this was a contingency which could impossibly happen among his newly-acquired serfs.

CHAPTER XII.

SUCH and similar conversations and discussions produced, however, the most beneficial consequences for the interest of Tchichikoff, and which he was far from anticipating; namely, the news was spread about, that he was nothing more or less than a millionaire. The inhabitants of Smolensk, without this new advantage, had already taken a particular fancy for Tchichikoff, as we have seen already from the first chapter; but now, and after such a report they began to like him more than heartily if possible.

However, if we are to speak the truth, we must confess that they were all excellent people,

lived in concord and unity, and behaved themselves in the most friendly and christian-like manner; whilst their daily conversation bore the stamp of a peculiar simplicity and candour quite of a primitive nature: "My dear friend Yliah Ylitsch! listen, brother Anthipator Sachariievitch! you have told a falsehood, my dear old gossip Ivan Gregorievitch!" and whenever they addressed themselves to the Postmaster, whom they called Ivan Andreievitch, they were sure to add, "sprechen sie deutsch?" in a word all lived in a very friendly and homely manner.

Many of them were not without pretensions to a superior education; his Excellency the President of the Council, for instance, knew by heart several of the poems of Pushkin and Zoukovsky, and could recite them with due emphasis, especially the passage commencing, "The forest sleeps, the plain is silent," and the word "hush!" was so cleverly pronounced by him, that it really seemed as if the forest was actually fast asleep; in order to add more effect and truthfulness to his recitation, he used at this passage to close his eyelids immediately.

The Postmaster inclined more towards natural philosophy, and continued reading very

diligently, even during the night Young's "Night Thoughts," and the "Key to the Secrets of Nature," by Eckartshausen, from which books he was even in the habit of making very long extracts, but of what description these extracts were it is impossible for us to tell; on the whole, he was sharp and acute, flowery in his language, and fond of composing original phrases, which, we regret, it is equally impossible for us to render in the English language.

The other men of importance were also, more or less, of a cultivated mind; some of them used to read translations from all languages, others again, delighted in the study of the authors of the country, or read the newspapers, whilst some even did not read at all. Some individuals were also difficult of comprehension, and could not understand you unless you took the trouble, as the phrase goes, to dot their i's for them; some again were as dull as a block-head—if we may use the expression; they would continue to stick to their prejudices and remain lying on their backs like a log of wood; it was perfectly useless to try to lift them up; they would listen to no persuasions.

As regards their general bodily appearance, it is already well-known to our readers that they were of an imposing countenance, solid and sober-minded men, there was not the least frivolity about them. They possessed all those qualities, which caused their wives in moments of tender conversation, and *tête-à-têtes* to address them pretty nearly in the following language: "Dear mullet; my little fat man; little fairy; pretty blacky; kiki; joujou," and so forth. And in general they were all good-natured and kind-hearted men, pervaded with a due sense of hospitality—a great and favourable characteristic trait of the whole nation. For if even a stranger had had an opportunity to taste what they call their "salt and bread," or sat with them at a game of whist, he became at once as it were dear to them.

And so much the more was it the case with Tchichikoff, who, thanks to his agreeable and gentlemanly manners, had completely ingratiated himself in their esteem and good opinion, because he had the secret gift of pleasing, whenever it was to his advantage convenient to do so. They had taken so great an affection for

him, that he could not possibly imagine a scheme or pretence under which he could leave the town; all he now heard daily was, "One little week more, only one more; you must stay and live with us, our dear Pavel Ivanovitch!" in a word he was treated in the most affectionate manner, and nursed, as the phrase goes, like a child in baby linen. But incomparably remarkable was the impression (the direct road to madness) which Tchichikoff had produced upon the fair sex of Smolensk. To explain this extraordinary fact, only approximatively, it would be necessary to say a great deal of the fair ladies themselves, their society; and paint in glowing colours the qualities of their hearts. But here it is that the author feels seriously embarrassed, because the thought occurs to him that he is now writing to please the fair inhabitants of the British isles, and that he has no longer the right to be elaborate in the description of the moral and physical qualities of his own countrywomen. On the other hand, he still feels a great respect for the husbands of Smolensk, and as for a third reason—the third reason is that it is really difficult to divine, or dive into the depth of the female heart.

The ladies of Smolensk were—no, it is impossible to tell what; I feel a peculiar timidity overcoming me all of a sudden. In the ladies of Smolensk the most prominent features were—it is really strange, but my pen refuses to obey the hand, and seems as if loaded with lead. Be it so; the description of their character I will leave to one more worthy than myself; to one who knows how to paint in vivid colours and with a powerful brush, and reserve to myself, in this instance, the modest privilege of saying a few words on their personal appearance and manners; it is a very superficial glance.

The ladies of Smolensk then, were what is termed presentable, and in this respect they could be confidently placed as a model to all other ladies. As to their manners, observances of fashion, maintenance of etiquette, and great propriety in its finest shades, but especially in the due observance of the laws of fashion in its last particulars, they rivalled, nay, even surpassed, the court ladies of St. Petersburg and Moscow. They dressed with great taste, drove about town in their own open carriages, made according to the last imported model from Vienna or London, with a seat behind in which a fat

flunkey covered over with gold lace was rocking himself gallantly.

Visiting cards were as the French say *de rigueur*, no matter whether the name was written upon the deuce of diamonds or the ace of spades, to have them, was a sacred obligation. For the sake of a visiting card two lady friends and even near relatives, fell out for ever, because the one had omitted to send her card in return to the other, and thus found wanting in reciprocating civility. And, notwithstanding the earnest endeavours of their husbands and friends effect a reconciliation between them, it proved a total failure ; and although many difficulties might be overcome in this world, yet this remained an impossibility, the reconciliation of two ladies, who fell out because the one of them committed a *manque de politesse* towards her friend. Thus then these two ladies continued to live in mutual disaffection.

As regards the privilege of occupying the first seat at concerts and evening parties, there happened also numerous differences and serious scenes ; inspiring their husbands, sometimes, with an extraordinary sense of chivalrous and mag-

unanimous courage in supporting and defending their rights and claims. Duels of course were not fought between them, because they were all knighted men and imperial *employés*, but instead, the one tried to annoy the other as much as possible, which in many instances is really worse than fighting a duel on the most disadvantageous terms.

As regards the *morale* of the ladies of Smolensk, they used to be, strictly speaking, extremely severe and rigid—full of an aristocratic indignation at the slightest offence, and the least flaw or weakness in that respect was condemned and punished with the utmost rigour. And if even, something or another did happen (which we will by no means call improper) among them, they always agreed to come to some secret compromise, so that it remained impossible ever to ascertain the real cause of the scandal, in fact, they followed the wise maxim of the great Napoleon, who, on such occasions used to say : “il faut toujours laver le linge sale en famille !”

As for the present Emperor of the French, it is impossible for us to tell positively, what his opinion on such a subject would be, though we

are led to believe that he is a man of considerable experience in family matters ; as for the kind husbands of the ladies in Smolensk, their honour continued to remain perfectly intact, and the decorum was preserved in every instance of that kind ; for they were so well prepared to meet an attack, that if even they happened to see something or another, or hear of it, they were always found ready with a dignified reply or a short proverb like the following : “ whose business I ask you is it, if the cousin and her cousin chose to sit in the pit ? ”

We must also not forget to add, that the ladies of Smolensk, were distinguished for their elegant expressions, and in that respect resembled and reminded us of the ladies at the imperial courts of Moscow and St. Petersburg ; they were extremely careful and graceful in their words and actions. They never used to say, I have snuffed my nose, I am perspiring, I spat ; but they expressed themselves in nearly the following terms : I have availed myself of my pocket handkerchief, dancing and walking excites me. It was also quite impossible for them to say ; this glass or plate is not clean, nor would they

use any term approximating to it, but instead, expressed themselves, perhaps, thus : this glass or plate has been considerably neglected, or something very much like it.

And in order to render the Russian language more aristocratic (for in Russia one likes to ape aristocracy if not autocracy), they had the habit of omitting one half of the words in their mother tongue, and replacing them cleverly with French phraseology, which language, rich as it is in *homonymes*, allows of expressions much stronger and more equivocal than those we have mentioned above, completely rejected as vulgar from the memory of the fair ladies of Smolensk.

And this is nearly all we have to say about the ladies of Smolensk, speaking superficially. But if we were to glance deeper into the character of these ladies, we should, of course, discover many more of their interesting propensities ; however, we will not venture to do so, because it is very dangerous to look to any depth into the heart of a lady. And thus limiting ourselves to superficial glances, we will again proceed in our observations.

Up to this time, the ladies in general had taken no very particular notice of Tchichikoff, they had rendered him, however, full justice by acknowledging him to be a perfect gentleman, and a man of extremely agreeable manners ; but from the moment that the report was spread about, that he was a millionaire, they discovered in him many more hitherto hidden qualities. However, the ladies themselves were not at all selfish ; the fault was lying in the word millionaire, not in the millionaire himself, but positively in the word ; because in the only sound of the word, or in the bag of money, is concluded a something that acts most powerfully upon the honest as well as the dishonest man, in fine, it produced an effect upon everybody.

The wealthy man enjoys the privilege of looking with leisure upon the most creeping business, the most barefaced civility, based upon no principle whatever ; many men of such character know perfectly well that they will receive nothing for degrading themselves thus far, and even that they have no right, whatever, to accept anything for doing so, but yet they will persist and rush forward to meet him, to smile when he approaches, to take off their hat when he passes,

and do everything to obtain an invitation to any dinner party where they may be sure of dining with the millionaire.

We will not venture to affirm that this servile inclination was perceptible in the ladies; however, in many of the drawing-rooms in town, the observation went the round, that Tchichikoff was certainly far from being handsome, but yet, that he was such as a man ought to be, and were he to be a little stouter or a little thinner, he would have certainly not have been even good looking. At the same time, it was also whispered about and rather to the disadvantage of slender men, that they resembled more a tooth-pick than a man.

In the toilettes of the ladies, many additions became about this time visible. The bazaars were crowded with visitors and purchasers nearly to suffocation; promenades were even brought into fashion, and the number of carriages driving about were nearly innumerable. The tradesmen seemed bewildered, when they saw that several pieces of silk stuff which they had purchased in the capital, and which they had not been able to sell till now, because they were pronounced too costly, found suddenly a ready

sale, and even occasioned disputes as to who should have the preference in their acquisition.

During the promenade, one of the fair ladies was observed to have something like a large ring adjusted in her dress, which would have been wide enough to cover the cupola of a church, and which very much embarrassed her in the progress of her walk, so much so indeed that the police-officer on duty ordered the common people to leave the parapet, so as not to be in the way of her Excellency.

Tchichikoff even in spite of his usual equanimity could not forbear to remark at last such unusual attention. One fine evening when he returned home to his hotel, he was surprised to find a neatly-sealed letter upon his table ; where it came from, and who had brought it, it was impossible for him to ascertain ; even the acute head-waiter could tell him no more but that some person brought it who had received instructions not to tell that it came from a lady.

The letter began in the following positive style : "No, I feel that I must write to thee!" Then something was said about a secret sympathy of souls ; this opinion was affirmed by

numerous little dots, which occupied more than half a line; then followed some thoughts very remarkable for their truthfulness, so much so, that we consider it indispensable to copy them.

“What is our life? A wilderness, covered with sorrows. What is the world? A crowd of insensible beings.” After this much, the fair writer observed that she was bathing with her tears the last lines of a tender mother, who had ceased to live for her these last twenty-five years. Tchichikoff was then invited to leave town for the solitude, because it was impossible to breathe freely in a place where the heart remained incarcerated by the chains of society. The latter part of the letter expressed real despair, and concluded in the following verse:

Two turtle-doves will show
Thee,—my cold grave,
Their mournful cooing will tell
Thee,—that I died in tears.

This is as nearly as we can give it in English, though we must confess that the original was also deficient in poetical composition. However, it was to the purpose, and quite in the spirit of the day. There was no signature at the bottom—no

christian name, nor family name, nor was the month or date mentioned. However, there was a postscript—whoever is accustomed to receive letters from ladies is of course aware they are in the habit never to post their epistles without the addition of a P.S. ; and as for my fair readers they know best why they never omit it. The postscript of the fair unknown to our hero went on to say that his own heart ought to tell him who she was, and that she would be at the Lord-Lieutenant's ball the next night, and that it was there that he should behold the original.

This epistle considerably excited and pre-occupied the mind of our hero. In this anonymous communication there was so much that was mysterious and provoked curiosity, that Tchichikoff could not resist reading it a second and then again a third time, and at last said, " I am really curious to know who the fair writer might be ! " In a word, the affair, to judge from appearances, promised to become a serious one. For more than an hour after he continued to think of it ; at last, stretching out his arms and leaning his head on one side, he exclaimed :

"I must confess the letter has been written very feelingly indeed."

Then, and as a matter of course, the letter was carefully folded up and placed in his writing-desk, close to an old play-bill and an invitation to a wedding, which he had kept there for these last seven years in the same apartment. Half an hour later he positively received an invitation to the ball of the Governor of Smolensk, in which there was nothing unusual, for at the seat of the provincial administration, where the Lord-Lieutenant resides, there are rejoicings and balls, else he could not depend upon the powerful support of the country nobility and gentry.

From the instant he received the invitation to the ball all else was set aside, and he began immediately to devote all his attention to the preparations for the evening party; because there were now many inciting and pleasant reasons. And for such reasons, perhaps, was there since the creation of the world, never so much time employed in the preparations for an evening party. More than an hour was exclusively devoted to the examination of his face in a looking-glass. He attempted to ex-

cute a variety of expressions ; at first he tried to assume an air of importance and propriety, then again a proud respectfulness, mingled with a smile, and again simply an air of respectfulness without a smile ; a few bows and inclinations were addressed to the looking-glass, accompanied by indistinct sounds, in some instances very much resembling the French language, though Tchichikoff did not understand French at all.

He presented himself with numerous pleasant surprises, moved his eye-brows up and down, contracted his lips, and even seemed to smack his tongue ; in a word, what does a person not do when alone, especially when under the impression that he is good-looking, and convinced that there is no indiscreet person to glimpse at him through the keyhole ?

At last, he pinched slightly his chin, and said, " Oh, you little rogue," and then he began to dress. It was in the best of humours that he accomplished his evening toilette. Whilst putting on his braces, or tying his cravat, he began to scratch compliments with his feet, and

bow forward with unusual grace, and though he was no dancer, he nevertheless executed an *entrechat*. This *entrechat* produced a slight but innocent effect ; it shook the chest of drawers, and his hair-brush fell from the sofa.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE appearance of our hero at the ball of the Governor of Smolensk created considerable sensation. Every one present turned round to receive him, some even held their playing-cards in their hands, whilst others stopped short in the most interesting part of their conversation, they deserted all and everything to rush forward and greet our hero.

“Pavel Ivanovitch! Good Heavens! here is our Pavel Ivanovitch! Amiable Pavel Ivanovitch! Most worthy Pavel Ivanovitch! Pavel Ivanovitch my soul! Here you are at last, excellent Pavel Ivanovitch! Allow me to embrace you my dear Pavel Ivanovitch! Give him up to me, let me embrace him most

passionately, my own dear Pavel Ivanovitch !”

Tchichikoff felt himself suddenly embraced on all sides, without the least chance of preventing it. He had not quite liberated himself from the affectionate embrace of the President, when he found himself already in the arms of the clever Commissioner of Police ; the police-master passed him over to the hands of the Inspector of the Medical Institutions ; the Inspector of Hospitals gave him up to the arms of the Imperial Contractor, the Contractor to the Architect.

The Lord-Lieutenant, who was standing at that moment and conversing with several ladies and presenting them with some *bonbons*, left them hurriedly to go and greet his guest, nearly crushing the favourite lap-dog of his lady ; in a word, Tchichikoff spread joy and pleasure all around him. There was not a face present that did not express satisfaction, or at least reflect the general gratification that suddenly prevailed over the company assembled. Our hero returned thanks and compliments to every one individually, and felt unusually versatile and cheerful ; bowed right and left,

as was his habit, slightly inclining towards on side, but with perfect ease, so that he charmed everybody.

The ladies, too, surrounded him like a garland of flowers, and spread as it were a cloud of a thousand perfumes over him : the one was scented like a rose, another like a violet, a third was strongly perfumed with patchouli.

Tchichikoff at first, did nothing else but raise his nose and smell about him. In their dresses there was immense taste ; the muslin, satin, and other silk dresses were of such pale and fashionable colours, that it was impossible to find them a proper name, to such a degree had the perfection of taste risen. Ribbon-favours and artificial bouquets, were strewn in great profusion and in the most picturesque disorder all over their dresses, though this disorder must have cost some weary hours to some intelligent dressmaker. The light and graceful head-dresses only rested on the tips of the ears, and they seemed to say : "oh, I am flying away, a pity it is that I cannot carry off my fairy herself !" Their waists were exceedingly well laced, and presented to the eye the most solid and well-proportioned forms (we must not for-

get to observe here, that the ladies of Smolensk were generally inclined to *embonpoint*, but used to lace so tightly and ingeniously, and were of so very agreeable manners that it was perfectly impossible to notice their fulness of body.

All was with them, studied and preconcerted with unusual carefulness; their neck and shoulders were uncovered as much as was absolutely necessary, and not a hair's-breadth farther; every one of them displayed her powerful charms so long until she felt perfectly convinced they had succeeded to ruin the peace of a man; as for their other treasures they remained hidden with much ingenuity; either under a light silken *fichu* or some Brussels lace surrounding their graceful neck, and called by the ladies "modesties."

These modesties, wound before and behind, all that which was not calculated to effect the perdition of their admirer, but they allowed him to guess that it was really there that his perdition was hidden. Their long white kid gloves were not drawn up as high as the elbow, but were allowed to remain carelessly wrinkled a little above the hand, which thus displayed to greater advantage the fulness of a charming

arm ; the long gloves of some of the ladies had even become torn, in consequence of the charming roundness of their arms ; in a word, all seemed to be impressed with the idea : no, this is not a provincial town in Russia, it is the capital itself, it is a second Paris.

Nevertheless, here and there an old-fashioned head-dress, never seen before on earth, or an extravagant plume would suddenly appear in the midst of fashion, as it were, to keep up contrast, and follow its own inclination. However, this could not be otherwise, such occurrences are inevitable in provincial towns, they will make their appearance in spite of any precautions. Tchichikoff thus standing and admiring, thought : " I wonder which of them is the mysterious composer of that interesting letter ? " and would have dearly liked to stretch forth his neck and nose ; but before his very nose he beheld a long range of curls, head-dresses, feathers, necks, ribbons, perfumed modesties, and dresses.

A polka-mazurka was just beginning : the Postmaster's lady, the Capitän-Ispravnik, a lady in a blue plume, a lady in a white plume, the Tcherkessian Prince Chipahilidseff, officers,

from the guards of St. Petersburg, and imperial *employés* from Moscow, foreigners and Russians—all started off in a mad dance.

“The whole province is whirling round,” said Tchichikoff, as he retreated into the background; but as soon as the ladies took their seats again after the dance was over, he immediately began to look about in all directions to try if possible, to discover by the expression of their faces or the sparkling of their eyes, who the authoress of the letter might be. Everywhere his eyes met with glances that betrayed a nearly imperceptible expression of captivating attraction, so very imperceptible.

“No,” said Tchichikoff to himself, “women are such subjects, that—” Here he could not help moving about his right arm in the air, and then he continued; “it is perfectly useless to speak of them. If anyone was to attempt to describe or define all that which flushes their faces, the serpentine movements of their muscles, the insinuating glances, all this, and much more, the result would be, that he could define nothing whatever. Their eyes alone, are in themselves an unlimited empire, in which to venture decides the fate of man. From those

boundaries he is sure never to return, nor will any mechanical instrument, however cleverly contrived, hook him out of it again. Were I to venture, for an example, to give an idea of their glance : so dewy, velvety. Heaven knows what else their expression and colour conveys to the human mind ; there are some looks full of harshness, and others again full of tenderness ; some full of longing, or as some say, full of effeminacy, or devoid of this peculiar softness, but what is more dangerous than all these expressions, is to be caught and captivated by such looks, when they pierce the heart, and when you find yourself utterly enthralled. No, it is really impossible to find the right term : the half of the human race devote their lives to gallantry, and to nothing else but that."

Meanwhile Tchichikoff became more and more bewildered, and incapable of deciding who the fair authoress of the letter might be. As he was trying to give a greater effect to the piercing glance of his eyes, he seemed to discover that the ladies on their part had also increased the expression of their glances, in which he fancied he beheld hope mingled with

sweet torments, all calculated to destroy the peace of his tormented heart, so acutely did he seem to feel it, that he at last exclaimed: "No, 'tis of no use, I cannot guess which it is."

This, however, did not completely destroy the excellent humour he was in. Unconstrained and with perfect freedom, he proceeded to exchange complimentary remarks with several ladies, approached them with a firm and easy step, or, as they say, he paced it gallantly, as old bachelor-fashionables do in their high-heeled boots, when they have all the appearance of racing mice, running and hopping in turn. Pacing thus gallantly, with graceful inclinations towards the right and towards the left, he executed at the same time with his foot, something like the tail of a shooting star, or uncommonly like a comma.

The ladies were, of course, not only delighted with him, but discovered a variety of more pleasing and fashionable manners in him, and they even thought they perceived in his face the undeniable signs of a high mind and something aristocratic and martial in his countenance, which qualities, as is well known, please ladies

exceedingly. On his account there arose nearly a little scandal: it had been observed that Tchichikoff chose to take his position more generally close to the entrance door; some of the ladies having noticed this, hastened immediately a dance was over, to secure a seat in that part of the *salon*, and if one of them had been more successful than the others, there arose immediately a sensation among them, which threatened to become really serious, for such pushing conduct was pronounced by those who were too late, and of course disappointed, to be highly improper and importunate.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is thus that Tchichikoff entertained the ladies, or rather, and better, it is thus that the ladies entertained and surrounded him on all sides with their chit-chat, interspersing it with endless insinuations and fine allegories, which were left for him to guess and interpret to the best of his intelligence, which, however, caused the perspiration to appear in large drops on his forehead; he was so captivated by their amiability that he had entirely forgotten to pay his tribute of respect in the first instance to the lady of the house. He only bethought himself of his forgetfulness, when her ladyship had been already standing for a few moments before him.

Her Excellency, the wife of the Lord-Lieutenant, said in a more than flattering tone of voice, and with a graceful movement of the head ; " Ah, Pavel Ivanovitch, at last I have the pleasure to meet you ! " I cannot exactly remember the words her Excellency spoke on that occasion, but they were full of that peculiar affability, which is used in modern novels, describing the fashions in high circles. Our hero turned round, and was just on the point of returning the compliment of her ladyship, and perhaps with as much good taste as any other hero of a novel, when suddenly raising his eyes, he stopped short, as if from the effects of an electric stroke.

Before him stood her ladyship, but not alone. She gave her arm to a charming *blondine*, with fine and regular features, with a round yet pointed chin, a bewitching oval face, such a head as an artiste would have chosen as a model for his Madonna, and which faces are indeed very rare appearances in Russia, where a taste for strongly developed forms is prevalent in everything, in mountains, in forests, and in steppes, in faces, in lips and in feet ; it was the same fair *blonde* with whom he met on his

road when leaving Nosdrieff's estate, and when, through the inadvertence of the coachmen, or the fault of the horses, their carriages had come into collision, and given so much trouble to the peasants to separate and bring them in order again. Tchichikoff became so much confused at seeing her that he could not utter a sensible phrase, and therefore stammered a few words, Heaven knows what, but something which a hero of a modern novel would never have ventured.

"You do not know my daughter?" said her Excellency ; "she has just left her Mājesty's institute at St. Petersburg."

He answered, that he had had already the good fortune of making her acquaintance, accidentally ; he then made an attempt to add something more, but that something more, would not pass his lips. Her ladyship, addressed a few more words to him, and then left him in leading away her daughter to the other end of the saloon, to introduce her child to her other guests ; but Tchichikoff continued to remain on the same spot, as if riveted to it, like a man, who had left his house in the best humour, and gone into the street with the intention of taking

a pleasant walk, with his eyes disposed to look at everything, but suddenly stops short and still, recollecting that he has forgotten something.

No one can look so foolish as a man in such a position; in an instant his careless thoughts desert his countenance, he tries to remember what it is he has forgotten; is it perhaps his handkerchief, but no, his handkerchief is in his pocket; perhaps his purse, but no, it is also in pocket; it seems to him that he has everything about him, and yet something whispers secretly, that he has positively forgotten something. And he will immediately look dull and distractedly upon the passing crowd around him, at the hurrying equipages, at the glittering helmets and arms of the passing soldiery, upon the gaily coloured sign-boards, but all will have lost its former charms for him.

Tchichikoff became at once a stranger to everything that passed around him. At that particular moment, also, numerous insinuations and questions full of a charming curiosity were addressed to him by the fair ladies.

“Are poor mortals of this world permitted to be so curious as to inquire a little, the subject of your meditations?”

“Where are those happy spots on which your thoughts seem to dwell?”

“Would you tell me the names of the one who has plunged you into these sweet meditations?”

Tchichikoff replied to all these phrases with the utmost indifference, and the pleasant phrases fell as it were into the water. He was even to such a degree uncivil, that he soon after left them and went away to the other end of the saloon, wishing to see in what direction her ladyship and daughter had gone. But the ladies seemed not inclined to part with him so soon; everyone of them resolved inwardly to use the most powerful means of aggression upon him, so dangerous to our hearts.

It must be observed that some ladies, I wish it to be understood, that some ladies, only, not all of them, possess a few foibles; if they are conscious that they have any high perfections about their persons, be it a fine forehead, a charming mouth, small hands, they will immediately fancy, that the handsomest part of their person is the first to attract general attention, and that all around on beholding it, will exclaim in one outburst of admiration: “Look

here, behold, what a classic Grecian nose she has, or what a marble-like resplendent forehead!" Whoever of them has fine shoulders, is persuaded at first starting, that all the young men will feel perfectly bewitched by her charms, and whisper as she passes them! "heavens, what charming shoulders that lady has!" but as for her face, hair, nose, forehead, they will forget to look at all, and if they should happen to do so, it would be with indifference, as if upon something not forming parts of the same person.

Such were the thoughts of some ladies. Every lady vowed to be as charming as possible during the evening and the dancing, and to expose in all its glory that corporeal perfection, which was perfection itself. The wife of the Post-master, as she was valseing round, bent her head so longingly on one side, that it was really unmistakeably charming. Another very amiable lady—who had arrived with the intention of not dancing at all, because the reason was the sudden apparition of a small pea-like exuberance on her left toe, in consequence of which she had been obliged to put on a pair of very easy boots—could not resist

the temptation to valse once round in her easy boots, to stop as it were the foolish pretensions of the Post-master's wife.

But all these well laid out plans and manœuvres did not produce the desired effect upon Tchichikoff. He even did not notice the circle they had been forming round him, but endeavoured to raise himself on tip-toes and look out if he could discover what had become of the fair *blondine* ; he also tried his fortune in discovering by sitting down and looking across shoulders and heads. At last he was successful, and discovered her, sitting close by her mother's side, upon whose head a plume fixed to a kind of Turkish turban, was balancing most majestically.

It seemed now, as if Tchichikoff wanted to take them by assault ; was it sudden gratification at having found what he had been searching for that acted upon him, or did some careless person push him from behind, but he literally rushed madly forward, heeding no one. The Public Contractor received such a push from him, that the poor man shook, and nearly lost his equilibrium, which might have caused the downfall of a whole range of guests ; the Post-master also

stepped back a few paces and kept looking after him with the utmost astonishment, mingled with a smile full of irony, he took no notice of either of them, but rushed quickly forward; he saw but the fair *blondine* in the distance, who was just putting her white and long kid gloves on, no doubt in preparation for the following dance.

As he passed along, he cast a hasty glance upon four couples who were delighting, as it seemed, in a mazarinka; the gentleman's heels dashed noisily against the floor; a cavalry colonel was dancing with body and soul, and hands and feet, and making such *pas* as no one perhaps ever executed even in a dream. Tchichikoff glided cleverly through the mazarinka and between the high-heels of the dancers, and advanced straight towards the place where the Lord-Lieutenant's lady was sitting with her daughter beside her. However, he approached them rather timidly, not pacing it so easily as before, nor tripping gallantly and fashionably; he even seemed confused, and a decided embarrassment was undeniably perceptible in all his movements.

It is impossible for us to affirm whether sensations of love had really taken possession, or

had been awakened in the bosom of our hero, because it is a matter of some doubt whether gentlemen of his description, namely : not so very stout, and yet not too thin, are still susceptible of the impressions of love ; but with all that, there was in his case something so very unusual indeed—a feeling for which he could not account for to himself. It seemed to him, and as he confessed it at a later period, that the whole ball, with all its noisy conversation and boisterous music, seemed for a few minutes to have been removed to some considerable distance from him ; the violins and cornets-à-piston seemed to be played behind a mountain, and, in fact, all appeared to be covered with a dim mist, not unlike that seen in an unartistic production of an extensive field in a Dutch landscape ; and in the midst of this misty and carelessly painted field, appeared prominently, and distinctly, and beautifully finished the fine features of the enchanting *blondine*.

Her oval pretty face, her graceful and svelt stature, of which only a young girl that has just left the imperial institution may boast, after a short sojourn in the world of fashion, her white, almost too simple, muslin dress, encir-

cling easily and freely her lovely form, which was defined in a peculiarly regular outline. It seemed to him that she resembled a pretty little puppet or plaything artistically carved in ivory ; she shone alone, and appeared luminous and bright in the midst of this dismal and impenetrable crowd.

CHAPTER XV.

SUCH seems to be the course of life in this world, and therefore it appears also that Tchi-chikoff, for a few minutes of his existence, suddenly became a poet, but the appellation of poet seems to be rather a strong term; at any rate, he felt within himself the sudden sensations of a lively youth, if not those of a dashing hussar. Perceiving an unoccupied chair near the two ladies he immediately sat down in it. His conversation was not very lively in the beginning, but after a while he felt more at home, and began to feel even a peculiar confidence gradually taking possession of him.

Here, and to our great discomfiture, we must

observe that sedate people and persons occupying high positions in life, are generally rather heavy in their conversation with ladies ; but, as masters past in this adroitness, we must proclaim our young officers, beginning from a cornet, but not passing, on any account, the rank of colonel. How they manage to be so amiable and gallant, heaven only knows ; they do not seem to speak very scientifically, nevertheless, you see their fair listeners laugh most heartily and move about their seats ; as for the civil men of the Empire, heaven also knows, what they have to say for themselves ; no doubt they extol the vastness of the Russias and the importance of their functions as public servants, or utter some complimentary phrases, which, though not devoid of imagination, smell horribly of books ; if a civilian has positively the good fortune to say anything amusing, he is sure to laugh at it much more heartily than any one else.

We have made these observations on the two distinct avocations of men in Russia, in order to show on which side lies the preference, and that our readers should understand at

once, why the fair *blonde* began to yawn during her conversation with our hero. Our hero, however, did not notice the circumstance at all, and continued to relate a thousand pleasing incidents, which he had repeated in many other places before now, and under the same circumstances; namely, in the government of Simbirsk, in the family of Lady Sophia Bespetchna, whilst paying his attentions to her daughter Adelaide; in the house of Fodor Fedorovitch Perekrojeff in the government of Rizan; at the country seat of Phrole Vassilievitch Pobedonosnoi, in the government of Pensa; in the government of Viatka, during his sojourn with Colonel Peter Varsonovitch, where he also had paid considerable attention to the fair sex.

All the ladies appeared now to be utterly displeased with the conduct of Tchichikoff. One of them passed him purposely to make him feel her displeasure, and touched even, as if inadvertently, the fair *blondine* with the hem of her dress, and as for the long scarf which graced her shoulders, she even contrived to touch with its silken tassels the face of the

fair girl; at the same moment he heard behind him an observation made by some fair lips, mingled with the perfumes of violets, which were far from being agreeable; but, on the contrary, stung him to the quick. But, he either did not hear the remarks distinctly, or pretended not to have heard them, besides they were far from being in his favour; he, therefore, thought it best to respect their opinion and remain silent, though he regretted it immediately after, but then it had become too late.

A general dissatisfaction, and in many respects very justifiable one, indeed, became visible on many faces. However important the weight of Tchichikoff might have been in that society, and though he was considered a millionaire, and though his face betrayed a high amount of talent, and his countenance even something martial, yet there are trifles for which a lady forgives no one; were he even the Emperor of Russia himself of gallant memory, he might consider himself a lost man. There are instances, when a woman, however weak and feeble in comparison with a man, becomes suddenly not

only stronger than a man, but even more powerful than anything on the face of the earth.

The sudden change in Tchichikoff's conduct towards the other ladies, which they considered unheard of before, determined them on forming a league among themselves against him, and which they concluded for his ruin, behind the chair on which he was sitting. The fact was, that they thought they had discovered in a few of the observations he addressed to his fair partner, though they were dry and commonplace enough, remarks that concerned them personally. To complete his disgrace with them, he had the misfortune to relate to her an anecdote about an event that had happened at a ball in another province, on which occasion some young fool had composed a whole poem in honour of the ridiculous persons who had happened to be present at that particular ball, and from which poem he recited a few passages on the dancing assembly.

These verses were at once, and blindly, supposed to be the composition of Tchichikoff himself. The general dissatisfaction with him rose, if possible, to a still higher degree, and

the ladies began to speak of him in various corners in the most disadvantageous terms indeed ; as for the fair *blondine*, she was completely annihilated, and her doom was sealed at once.

Meanwhile, a most unexpected and unpleasant catastrophe threatened the laurels of our hero ; at the time, when the fair *blonde* was yawning, and he exerting himself to relate to her the most pleasant of his reminiscences, and trying even to imitate the Greek philosopher Diogenes ; at that moment, and at the extremest end of the saloon, who should make his appearance but Nosedrieff. But where did he come from, was it from the refreshment-room, or from the small green room where gambling was carried on without limit. Did he enter freely of his own accord, or was he thrust forward by some one, or by fatality herself ?

Whatever brought him there is impossible for us to tell, but the fact is that he made his appearance quite suddenly and in the best humour of the world ; he seemed exceedingly pleased and gay, and held the arm of the Procurator firmly in his own, which caused the

other to frown repeatedly with his thick and heavy eyebrows, as if trying to hit upon a scheme by which to escape from this strong grasp and this too friendly arm-in-arm promenade.

The position of the Procurator appeared to be perfectly unbearable. Nosedrieff, who seemed to have imbibed considerable courage from two cups of tea, which of course he had not swallowed without a considerable addition of rum, began as usual to tell the most incredible stories. On perceiving him at a distance, Tchichikoff determined at once, though with great regret, to give up his enviable seat, and hasten away as quickly as possible; because an internal feeling told him that this encounter would have fatal consequences.

But as if to confirm his presentiment, in that very instant his Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant prevented him carrying out his intention as he turned towards him and remarked good-humouredly, that he was very glad to meet his friend Pavel Ivanovitch, whom he wished to be a judge between himself and two ladies, to decide the question, whether woman's love was

permanent or not; at that same moment Nodrieff also caught sight of our hero, and came straight up to him.

"Ah, the gentleman from Kherson, the Chersonese slave-owner!" he exclaimed, as he approached and burst out into a fit of laughter which made his fresh, rosy-coloured cheeks tremble, "Well, how many more dead men have you acquired? But your Excellency does not perhaps know," he continued, in the same strain, as he turned towards the Governor of Smolensk, "that our worthy friend here deals in dead serfs! By Heavens, listen to me, Tchichikoff! I tell you as a friend, and all here present are your friends, and even his Excellency is present, if I could do it, I would hang thee; by Heavens, I could hang thee!"

Tchichikoff seemed really not to know where he was.

"Would your Excellency believe," continued Nodrieff, "that when he said to me: 'sell me your dead serfs,' I nearly burst with laughter. I arrive here, and am told that he has been purchasing serfs to the amount of three millions worth, with the purpose of emigrat-

ing with them into the Government of Kherson ; but how is he to settle them over? he has been bargaining with me for my dead serfs. Listen, Tchichikoff, I tell you candidly, and I proclaim it even in the presence of all, you are the devil's own favourite, his Excellency is present; and what do you say, Procurator?"

But the Imperial Procurator, and Tchichikoff, and the Governor of Smolensk himself, became so very much confused, that they did not know where to seek for countenance and what to reply, meanwhile; Nosedrieff, without paying the least attention to them, continued to address himself to our hero in a half-inebriated state and most insulting language.

"Ah, my fine fellow, you, you—I shall not leave you, before you have told me for what purposes you have purchased these dead serfs. Listen to me, Tchichikoff, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, for you know but too well that you have not a better and a more candid friend than myself. His Excellency is even present, and what do you say, Procurator? Your Excellency would not believe how much attached we are to each other, if you

were to say, now, here you are both, and ask me the question: 'Nosdrieff, upon your honour, who is dearer to you—your own father, or Tchichikoff?' I would answer unhesitatingly, 'Tchichikoff;' by Heavens I would. Allow me, my darling friend, to impress a kiss upon you. I hope your Excellency will allow me to embrace him. Yes, my dear Tchichikoff, pray do not resist me, allow me to impress but one friendly kiss upon your tender snow-white cheek!"

Nosdrieff was so harshly repulsed with his intended kiss, that he nearly rolled to the ground. Everyone stepped back, and nobody would listen to him any more; nevertheless, the words he had spoken about the purchase of dead serfs were uttered in so loud a tone by him, that every person present, even those in the farthest corners of the room had heard them, and their attention was awakened.

This news seemed to be so very strange, that all present remained as if rivetted to the spot, and kept looking at each other for some moments with a peculiarly statue-like, stupidly curious countenance. Tchichikoff observed that

several ladies exchanged glances full of a malicious expression, and in the faces of several of them he thought he perceived undeniable signs of insinuation which considerably increased his embarrassment.

It was well known to every one that Nosedrieff was a merciless story-teller, and that it was nothing unusual with him to advance the greatest absurdities ; but a mortal—it is really difficult to define the composition of a mortal—whatever the news may be, provided it is news, he is sure to communicate it immediately to some other mortal, and if it should be only for the sake of adding, “look ye, what a falsehood they are speaking about !” and the other mortal inclines with gratification his ear to listen to it, although he will observe after having heard it, “Yes, really, it is a shameless falsehood, and not worth the least credence ;” but immediately after he will hasten to meet a third mortal, to tell everything about it, and exclaim together with a noble indignation, “what a mean falsehood.”

And such news soon makes the round of the town ; and all the mortals, however many there

might be living in it, are sure to discuss on it to satiety, and then acknowledge that it was really too base a falsehood and not worth attention, nor the trouble of speaking about any more.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS apparently absurd occurrence seemed nevertheless to annoy our hero considerably. However stupid the words of a fool might be, yet sometimes they are powerful enough to disconcert a wise man. He began to feel uncomfortable and ill-at-ease, like a man who might have accidentally stepped with a pair of patent leather boots into a neglected London sewer. In a word, he felt very uncomfortable. He tried not to think of it any more, attempted to cheer himself up again. In order to distract himself he sat down to play a game of whist; nevertheless, all went like a wheel out of repair. He played twice the wrong colour,

and forgetting the rule that you don't cut the third time, but leave the chance to your partner, he did so to the great annoyance of his *vis-à-vis*.

The President could not understand at all how his friend, Pavel Ivanovitch, who understood the rules of the game so well, and who was even an acute player, could make all these blunders, and put a trump upon his king of spades, upon which card he had reckoned as upon a wall of stone.

The President and the Post-master, and even the Commissioner of Police, as a matter of course, passed their friendly jokes upon our hero at these occurrences, and insinuated that Pavel Ivanovitch must be, nay was, in love, and that they nearly guessed who had caused all his absence of mind, and drawing attention from the game. But all these observations made no impression upon him, and do what they like, they could not succeed in making him even smile or return their jokes.

At supper he was still in the same disposition of mind, and could not even then rally, notwithstanding that he was placed in very good

company, and that the hateful Nosedrieff had been obliged to leave the house, because the ladies themselves could not help expressing themselves scandalised with his conduct. The supper was very excellent, and seasoned with general gaiety ; all the faces which appeared as it were from under the three branched candelabra, flowers, tarts and bottles, were illuminated with the most unfeigned pleasure. Military men and civilians, ladies, dress-coats, all became most amiable, even to affectation. The gentlemen deserted their chairs and hastened to take the dishes from the hands of the overburthened servants, with the intention to present them themselves to their fair partners at table. A dashing colonel presented a plate with liquid sweets to his lady on the point of his unsheathed sword. Some gentlemen of a sedate and serious age, among whom Tchichikoff happened to sit, were discussing politics most earnestly, whilst eating at the same time some fish and meat unmercifully seasoned with vinegar and mustard. They were conversing on a subject in which he generally liked to take a lively part ; nevertheless, he remained silent, and like a man who

seemed to be much fatigued or annoyed from a long journey, who feels a peculiar dulness of spirit, and who is incapable of taking any interest in anything. He even did not wait for the end of the supper, but left the company suddenly, and returned to his hotel much earlier than he was wont to do.

In that small apartment, so well known to the reader, with the door barricaded with a chest of drawers, and with the beetles looking out from the corners occasionally, the disposition of his mind and soul was so full of uneasiness, in fact as uneasy as the chair upon which he was sitting. His heart felt sick and oppressed as if from a tiresome void that was left within it. "I wish the devil had those who imagined and brought into fashion those infernal balls!" said he, passionately, within his own heart. "Wherever did they pick up the silly idea of dancing and feasting? the whole province has been visited, for three years running, by bad harvests and general dearth, and they give balls and festivals! What an ill-timed fancy; to dress themselves up in gaudy paraphernalia! And as if I had not seen that some of the silly women had

wrapped themselves up in shawls worth a thousand roubles ! And all that at the expense of their poor serfs, or, what is still worse, at the expense of men like ourselves. It is but too well known, why a man takes advantage of his position, and injures his soul and conscience ; simply for the purpose of offering to his wife a shawl or some such gaudiness for the name of which I do not care a fig.

“ And why is this so ? for the important reason, that some other gossiping body should not have occasion to say that the wife of the Postmaster or Procurator had a handsome dress on, and for such pretensions you have to pay down often more than a thousand roubles in hard cash. The hue and cry, is ; ‘ a ball, a ball, let us rejoice ! ’ balls are really a nuisance, not at all suitable for the Russian genius, not at all to the taste of our Russian nature, the devil knows for whom balls are fit ; an adult, a perfectly grown up person will suddenly take it in his head to appear all in black, laced and dressed up like a young fiend, and begin to fight about with his legs like a madman. Another again, though standing near his partner, will turn round to his

friend and pretend to speak of things of importance, and still continue to cut capers like a goat, right and left.

“All this is pure monkeyism, nothing but monkeyism ! Because a Frenchman of forty is as childish as he was in his youth, we Russians ought to be ashamed to imitate him ! No, really, after each ball I cannot help feeling as if I had committed a sin ; and I would fain not even think of it. My head feels absolutely as empty as after a tedious conversation with a fashionable, who speaks of everything, touches slightly on a hundred subjects at the time, he will make use of all that he has been successful enough to pick up in books, be showy, brilliant ; but as for his own imagination, it is incapable of producing anything original, and it is then we find, that the simple conversation of a common tradesman, who knows his business well, is more useful ; it is then we find how empty and foolish the conversation of the man of fashion is.

“And as for their balls ? What good can possibly be derived from a ball ? Let us even suppose, for an instance that an author was to undertake to describe all the scenes and occurrences of the ball room, such as they really are ?

Even in his book, it would appear as insipid and foolish as it is in reality. And pray, what is a ball? Is it moral or is it immoral? The devil take me if I know what to call it! It is with utter disgust, that one would throw away the book even, that speaks of, or describes a ball!"

It was thus unfavourably that Tchichikoff expressed himself on balls in general; but it seemed that another cause of displeasure was deeply involved in these expressions. His great displeasure was not principally directed against the ball itself, but rather the occurrence that took place there, and his sudden breaking down from his enviable position, which made him appear, Heavens knows in what light in the opinion of the guests assembled, and that he had been playing a peculiar, strange, and equivocal *rôle*.

Of course, looking at the matter in the light of a man of the world, he saw at a glance, that the whole affair was bosh and nonsense, that the word of a fool could not harm him, especially now, that the business itself was completely, satisfactorily and legally terminated. But man is strange: he was exceedingly provoked by the ill feeling of those, for whom he had no condescension himself, and of whom he had even

spoken in very strong and cutting terms, ridiculing their vanity and follies.

This aggravated him so much the more, because, after having seriously reflected upon the subject, he could not deny that he had in a great measure been the cause of their ill-feeling himself. However, with himself he was not angry at all, and in this he was right, as a matter of course. We possess all the indulging weakness to be less severe with ourselves, and vent our anger in preference upon our neighbour or servants. And thus it was also with Tchichikoff, who soon managed to find a fellow-creature who had to talk and bear upon his shoulders all that his angry mood inspired him with. This victim fellow-creature, was Nosedrieff, and we must confess, that the poor fellow was unmercifully abused for his interference and indiscretion; the expressions which our hero used at the time of his anger, was so very strong indeed that this English paper—we are convinced—could not bear them, and for this excellent reason we beg to omit them. Yet we may add that the whole race of the Nosedriefts was wished at the bottom of the sea, in which even his most distant relations were included.

Tchichikoff continued for some considerable time to remain seated in his uncomfortable chair, tormented by unpleasant recollections, cursing heartily, Nosedrieff, his ancestors and descendants, whilst the tallow-candle before him was melting rapidly down, because the wick was long since covered with a large black cap, and the light threatened every moment to expire altogether; a dark and gloomy night stared at him through the window, and was preparing to give precedence to the break of day, in the distance the hoarse crowing of a few early cocks became also audible, and in the yet soundly somnolent town, many a poor and homeless sheep-skin-wearer, might have been seen wandering about hopelessly and heaving sighs of despair, which unfortunately for old Russia are threatening to become more and more innumerable.

At this particular time, too, there happened also something unusual at the other end of the town, and which occurrence threatened to increase the already very unpleasant position of our hero: namely, through the distant and narrow streets of Smolensk a peculiarly shaped and antique-looking carriage was ricketting over the pavement in its approach to the centre of the town;

the name and description of this carriage would have bewildered the cleverest coach-builder of England.

It was not like any of the carriages we are now accustomed to see in the streets of large towns; it was neither what we call a britchka nor a tarantas, nor was it anything like a barouche or a cart, but the nearest resemblance it presented, was to an immense hollowed water-melon, placed upon four wheels. The sides of this water-melon, or rather its cheeks, since they were to represent the doors of that carriage, still bore a trace of yellow colour about them, opened and shut very indifferently, because the handles and locks were in a dilapidated condition, and were not fastened with screws or nails, but common string. The water-melon (which reminds us forcibly of the carriage built in five minutes by the clowns at the Haymarket) was filled up with a variety of pillows of all sizes, bags containing bread, cakes and pastry. The stand behind was occupied by a sitting servile creature, in a short grey home-spun cloak, with unshaved beard, intersected here and there by silvery grey; this servile servant was known by the name of young Safran.

The noise and creaking of the iron hinges and rusty screws was so loud, that it awakened a sleeping policeman at the other end of the town, who, suddenly aroused, seized his halberd and shouted out with all his might, "Who comes there?" but, seeing that nobody was coming, he easily understood that he had taken the distant rattling noise for somebody approaching, at the same time he caught upon his coat an insect, which he at once took close to the lamp-post and executed on the spot upon his nail. After having thus punished the invader, he returned to his post, laid aside his halberd, and fell again asleep, according to the custom of the Russian police.

The horses before the water-melon kept falling on their fore-legs continually, because they had never been shod at all, and because the pavement of a town seemed to them perfectly strange ground. The old-fashioned vehicle made a few more turnings in and out of a few more narrow streets, and then turned again into a perfectly dark lane, at the end of which it passed a dilapidated old church, and then suddenly stopped before the house next to it, which was inhabited by the Proto-pope and his wife.

A young girl, with her head wrapped in a large handkerchief, was the first person that alighted from the old coach; she seized the knocker of the door with both her hands, and began to make as great a noise with it as a man (young Safran was dragged by his legs from his seat, because he had plunged himself in a death-like sleep).

The dogs of the house began barking as loud as they possibly could, and the gates were soon after thrown open, though it took considerable time to get the old vehicle through them into the court-yard, which was a very narrow one indeed, stocked with logs of wood, a poultry-yard, and other court-yard incumbrances; the second person that now alighted from out of the water-melon coach was an old lady, and this old lady was no one else than her ladyship Korobotchka.

The old lady had, soon after the departure of our hero, felt considerable uneasiness, and, in consequence, remained under the impression and apprehension that he might have taken an unwarrantable advantage over her inexperience, and, not having slept during three consecutive nights, she determined upon coming to town at

once, notwithstanding that her horses were not fit for such a long journey, in order to ascertain positively what the real market value for dead serfs was, and to convince herself that she had made no mistake and sold them perhaps—which heaven forbid—for three times less than their real value.

What the further consequences of her arrival in town were, the reader will perhaps glean from a conversation between two ladies only. This conversation—but I think it will be more amusing to leave the dialogue for the following chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

EARLY in the morning, considerably earlier even than is fashionable to pay visits in the town of Smolensk, the door of an orange painted house, with balconies and sky-blue pillars was suddenly thrown open, and a lady, wrapped in a long silk cloak of a chess-board pattern, rushed hurriedly into the street, followed by a servant in livery, who wore a cloak with numerous little collars, and a large gold-laced band ornamented his round and carefully brushed hat.

The lady slipped hastily over the steps, and into the open carriage, which had been waiting for her already for some time before the principal entrance of the house. The servant in

livery immediately after shut the lady up in the carriage by closing the carriage-door after her, and having put up the steps, he seized the straps, which were fixed behind the carriage, and shouted to the coachman, "drive on!"

The lady in the carriage, being the bearer of the latest news, was, of course, particularly anxious to arrive at her destination with the least possible delay. Every moment she kept peeping out of the window of her carriage, and found to her apparently great annoyance that she had still the other half of her journey to make. Every house which the carriage passed seemed to her to be unusually longer than ordinarily; the chalk coloured workhouse, with its narrow and low windows, stretched itself in the most tiresome length, so much so indeed, that the fair occupant of the carriage could no longer repress her impatience, but exclaimed, "how provoking, this miserable edifice seems to have no end at all!"

Her coachman had already twice received instructions to drive on quicker, and she herself shouted twice to him saying: "you are unbearably slow this morning, Karpuschka! for heaven's sake hasten, hasten on!"

At last she had arrived at her destination. The carriage stopped before a building of wood, only one story high, but very extensive, painted of a dark slate colour, with white plaster-work ornaments on the top frames of the windows, with a wooden railing projecting as far as the pavement, behind which a few scanty-looking poplars were growing, the leaves of which were covered with imperishable dust, heaped upon them by continual winds. In every one of the numerous windows, flower-pots with Dutch tulips, pleasantly relieved the gloomy slate-colour of the house, a parrot was balancing himself to and fro in his cage, trying to catch with his beak the ring in it ; and two lap-dogs were lying on a cushion in one of the windows, enjoying the early rays of the rising sun. In this house dwelt the very intimate friend of the lady who had just arrived in her carriage.

The author feels considerably embarrassed as to the names of the two ladies, because in the Russian language it happened that the real names of the two ladies conveyed the most fitting idea of their character, and which it would be nearly impossible to render properly in English. Many an author is often embarrassed

for a name, and many another not at all, as for ourselves, we must confess, we feel really considerably so. There are persons that say: "What is there in a name?" Nothing! With those persons we beg to differ considerably, because we are of the opinion, and maintain it, that there is much, if not all in a name. To wit, the name of Nicholas! does it not convey the idea of the most barbarous, if not the most unchristian potentate of Europe? reigning over sixty-two millions, nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-nine other unfortunate barbarians! (since we are in free England, we beg to exclude ourselves from making up the even number of sixty-three millions, at which enormous amount the faithful subjects of his Imperial Majesty have been computed, according to the latest statistics of the Empire.)

Again, the name of Victoria! does it not convey an idea of the most christian and lovely Queen that reigns over the most enlightened, and most liberal nation in Christendom? And since the prestige of these two names cannot be denied, we feel still more confirmed in our opinion that there is much, if not all in a name.

And for this reason we will also christen in the most conscientious, and in the most fitting English expression, the two ladies we are now about to introduce to our fair readers.

Without any further apologies and preliminaries, then, we will call the lady who received the early morning visit of her friend, simply and thus, as she was well known in Smolensk : "the in every respect amiable lady." This name she had acquired in the most legitimate manner indeed, because she stood on no sacrifices to be always amiable to the highest degree of amiability. Though, of course, her passionate feminine character made but too frequent incursions upon her reputation of perfect amiability ; and though in each of her amiable qualities, and especially words, there seemed pins and needles hidden ; and, good Heaven ! preserve that lady who would dare to presume in anything to be the first, for such presumption was sufficient to make the blood boil in the very heart of the in every respect amiable lady.

But all these amiable qualities were hidden under the most exquisite taste and fashion. Each of her movements was impregnated and executed with much gracefulness and taste,

she was even very fond of poetry, and knew also how to incline her head into a musing attitude, in a word, all were of opinion that she was really and in every respect, the most amiable lady in Smolensk.

The other lady, namely, the one that had arrived in her carriage, was not of such a polyhedral character, and for that reason we shall call her ; the simply amiable lady. The arrival of the latter lady awakened at once the little lapdogs that were lying in the sun ; the long-haired Adèle that was always entangled in her own wool, and the proud Popuri upon his fine high legs. Both dogs barking, rushed with their tails in the air towards the ante-room, where the visiting lady was at once disembarrassed of her silk cloak of a chess-board pattern, and she appeared now in the reception-room, dressed in the latest fashion for a morning visit. She wore a light-coloured muslin dress, also of a fashionable colour and pattern.

Scarcely had the in every respect amiable lady heard of the arrival of her intimate friend, the simply amiable lady, when she hurried out of her bed-room to receive her. The ladies seized each other's hands, kissed one another

most affectionately, and exclaimed both at the same time, like two young girls will do on meeting again after having left the imperial institution, and when their dear mamma has not yet had an opportunity to whisper to them, that the father of the one is poorer and lower in rank than the other.

The friendly kiss was a loud one, because of the renewed barking of the two dogs, who were frightened away with a shawl, and both ladies proceeded at once into the *boudoir*, which was of course decorated with sky-blue coloured paper-hangings, curtains and furniture, with numerous rocking chairs and easy sofas, with an oval table inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a rich mantel-piece, decorated with malachite nick-nacks, relieved in bronze, while here and there stood a few sky-blue screens ; the ladies were followed by the woolly Adèle and the proudly stepping legs.

"Here, here, my dear, in this snug little corner!" said the mistress of the house, whilst seating her guest into the very corner of her elegant sofa. "That is right! take this cushion to lean upon, and now I am sure you will feel comfortable!"

Saying this, she placed a cushion, embroidered in wool behind her friend's back ; it represented a troubadour with a guitar slung around his neck, such as are usually embroidered upon canvass : his nose resembled a ladder, and as for his lips, they were regular squares.

"How very glad I am indeed to see that it is you. I heard a carriage stopping before the door, but could not for a moment imagine whoever could come so very early ; my chambermaid thought it was the wife of our Vice-Governor, and I said immediately : how provoking, she is such an insipid woman ; and I was on the point of giving orders to say that I was not at home."

Her guest was just on the point of plunging at once *in medias res*, and communicating to her friend the important news she had brought ; but the sudden exclamation of the in every respect amiable lady, gave at once another direction to their conversation.

"What a gay-coloured muslin !" exclaimed the in every respect amiable lady, as she cast a glance upon the dress of the simply amiable lady.

"Yes, a very lively-coloured one indeed. My cousin, Praskovia Fedorovna, however, thinks, that it would have been prettier, if the checks in it were smaller, and the little dots in them blue instead of brown. By the bye, I sent the other day, a dress for my sister, which was really so very charming, that it is quite impossible to describe it in words; imagine only, my dear, small stripes, as small as human imagination can possibly fancy them, on a blue ground, and across these stripes, little eyes and paws—eyes and paws—eyes and paws. In a word, charming! incomparable! I may really say that anything similar has not yet been seen before."

"My darling love, that is too showy."

"Oh, no, my angel, it is far from being showy."

"I can assure you it is!"

We must observe here, that the in every respect amiable lady, was in many other respects also a great materialist, inclined to contradictions and doubts, and fond of questioning a great many other things in this world.

As for the simply amiable lady, she simply explained to her friend, that the dress she had sent to her sister, was far from being showy at

all, and continued: ‘ by the bye, allow me to compliment you on a change in fashion; *volants* are to be worn no longer!’

“Good gracious! what do you say, out of fashion?”

“Yes, indeed, and instead of them we are to wear festoons.”

“Surely, that cannot be pretty, festoons?”

“Festoons, all and nothing but festoons; the mantles are worn with festoons, the sleeves have festoons, the epaulettes are made of festoons, below festoons, everywhere festoons.”

“Oh, I’m sure it won’t be nice, my dear Sophia Ivanovna, if all and everything is to be worn with festoons.”

“It is really charming, my own Anna Grigorievna, incredibly charming; they are sewn in two rows: and above—oh, really, you would be amazed if I was to describe to you all the particulars. Now then, listen to me and be astonished: imagine only, the waist is worn still longer, the body very full over the chest, and as for the corset and the whale-bones in it, it is really passing belief; the skirt is made very ample all around, as they used to wear *phisms* in former days, a little wadding is discreetly

introduced behind so as to make of you a perfectly *belle femme*."

"I must confess, this is rather too much!" said the in every respect amiable lady, with a dignified movement of the head.

"I say as much; it is really going too far!" replied the simply amiable lady.

"Please yourself as to adopting this novelty; for my own part, I am determined not to submit to this ridiculous innovation."

"I thought of doing as much. Really, when you come to consider it, to what absurdities fashion may lead you; it is perfectly ridiculous to think of it! I asked my sister to send me the pattern from St. Petersburg just to look and smile at it; Mélanie, my dressmaker, however, insisted upon making me a dress like it."

"Have you really got the pattern of it, my dearest?" asked quickly the in every respect amiable lady, not without visible emotion.

"Indeed, I have, since my sister sent it me the other day."

"My darling pet, pray give it to me, I entreat you by all that is sacred."

"Alas, I have promised it already to my cousin, Paskovia Fedorovna. Would you like to have it afterwards?"

"Surely, you don't expect me to accept of it after Paskovia Fedorovna has had it? Really, that would be rather strange behaviour on your part, were you to give the preference to others but me."

"But my dear Anna Grigorievna, you seem to forget that she is my cousin."

"Heaven knows what cousin she is to you! on your husband's side perhaps. No, Sophia Ivanovna, I will not even listen, this is exceeding all bounds. You wish to slight me; it seems you are tired of me, you wish to break up our acquaintance and friendship."

Poor Sophia Ivanovna was completely at a loss what to do. She felt acutely, between what burning fires she had placed herself. How silly it was of her to have boasted of her pattern! She was now ready to prick her indiscreet tongue with a needle. Fortunately, however, the conversation was suddenly changed to an even more interesting topic, and she was relieved from her painful position.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“AND pray, why have you seen or heard of our darling stranger?” meanwhile inquired the in every respect amiable lady.

“Good Heaven! why am I sitting here like a silly girl! it’s really absurd; but you don’t know then, my dear Anna Grigorievna, what the cause of my early morning visit is?”

Here the respiration of the fair visitor became oppressed, the words threatened to burst forth in rapid succession like a hawk pursuing his prey, and it was only possible for a person such as her intimate friend was, to be so inhuman as to stop her overflowing heart.

"Whatever intention you may have of praising and exalting him," she said, in an unusual passion, "I shall mention and even tell himself if he likes, that he is but a frivolous man, and a very, very frivolous one indeed."

"But listen only, my dear child, what I am going to confide to you—"

"They have spread the report that he was handsome, and he is nothing of the kind, he is not handsome at all, and as for his nose—it is the ugliest nose I ever beheld."

"Allow me, but allow me only to tell you, my angelic Anna Grigorievna, suffer me to tell you all about him! It is a whole history, understand me well: I came here to give you a biographical sketch of the man who has created and still creates so great a sensation in Smolensk," her guest spoke with an expression approaching despair, and in a decidedly entreating, supplicating tone of voice.

"What do you know about him?"

"Oh, my darling Anna Grigorievna, if you could only know the awful position in which I have been placed, ever since the dawn of this eventful day; only imagine, this morning, very early indeed, the wife of our Proto-pope, of our

worthy Father Kyrilla, arrives at my house, and would you ever have believed it—our much praised and gentlemanly stranger—no, I'm sure you could not believe it !”

“ What, has he been making love to the Proto-pope's wife ?”

“ Alas, Anna Grigorievna, it would have mattered little if he had been only doing that ; listen now attentively to what the wife of our worthy Father Kyrilla has told me ; she arrived early this morning at my house—as I told you before—she looked frightened and pale as death ; she at last could open her lips and begin to speak ; good Heavens, and how she spoke ! Listen, dear, it is a perfect romance ; suddenly, in the midst of a dark night, when all were fast asleep, a knock is heard at the gate, such a frightful knock, as it is only possible to imagine ; some one shouts from outside ; ‘ open the gates, open them, or else we shall break them down !’ how do you like the beginning ? And especially, how do you like after this, our *fêted* stranger ?”

“ Well, no doubt the pope's wife is young and handsome !”

“ Not at all, she is an old woman !”

“Ha, ha, ha, delightful! It is then with old women that he is flirting. After this, I may compliment our ladies in their choice, they have at last found some one to fall in love with!”

“But my dearest Anna Grigorievna, it is not at all what you fancy. Represent him to yourself as armed from head to foot in the style of Fra Diavolo, demanding; ‘Sell me all your souls (serfs) that are dead!’ Lady Korobotchka answered very reasonably, indeed, by saying: ‘I cannot sell them, because they are dead.’ ‘No,’ says he again, ‘they are not dead, it is my business to know whether they are dead or not; they are not dead, they are not dead!’ he shouts in a passion; in a word, he has created the greatest scandal imaginable. The whole village was in an uproar, the children crying, all others shouting, nobody could understand anybody, really, it was horror! horror! horror! But you would scarcely believe it, my dear Anna Grigorievna, how all this has upset me, when I came to hear it.

“‘Dear lady,’ says my chambermaid to me, ‘pray look into the looking-glass, you are quite pale and discomfited.’

“‘Never mind the looking-glass now, Mas-

chinka,' I said to her, 'I must now hasten and tell all to my dear Anna Grigorievna.' At the same time I immediately ordered my carriage; my coachman, Karpuschka, asks me where he is to drive me to, and I felt so very much overwhelmed that I could not articulate a word, I stared him in the face quite foolishly; I think the man believed me mad at the time. Ah, my dear Anna Grigorievna, if you could only but imagine how much frightened and distracted I feel even now."

"This is rather strange," said the in every respect amiable lady. "What can these dead souls mean? I must confess, I cannot imagine or understand anything in this really strange affair. This is already the second time that I have heard about these dead serfs; my husband assures me that Nosedrieff told another of his falsehoods; however, there must be something at the bottom of it."

"But, dearest Anna Grigorievna, can you imagine for a moment my position when I heard of all this. Listen farther!

"And now," continued Lady Korobotchka, 'I really do not know what am I to do. He obliged me,' says she, 'to sign my name to an apparently

forged document, threw fifteen roubles in bank notes before me, on the table, and I,' she says, 'inexperienced and unprotected woman, took them.' This is the whole of the dreadful occurrence ! But if you could but imagine, how very much frightened and disturbed I feel, even now !

"Whatever you may say or think about it, I assert that there are no dead serfs in question ; but there is something else hidden."

"I agree with you," replied the simply amiable lady, not without some surprise, and felt immediately an unconquerable desire to know what might be hidden under this strange affair. She pronounced the following words in a slow and measured tone of voice : "And what do you really think is hidden under the pretence of purchasing dead serfs ?"

"Pray, tell me first what you think of it ?"

"Oh, what I think of it—I—I really must confess, I feel still quite bewildered from the news."

"Nevertheless, I should have very much liked to know what your opinion upon the subject is ?"

However, the simply amiable lady could find no opinion to express. She only knew how to be full of anxiety ; but to imagine a complicated

supposition was an impossibility to her, and for that reason, more than any other woman, she was obliged to have resource to tender friendship and suggestions.

“ Well, listen then to me, and I will tell you what these dead souls mean,” said the in every respect amiable lady, and her guest concentrated all her attention upon hearing ; her little ears became, if possible, longer, she rose slightly from her seat, nearly not sitting nor leaning on the sofa, and regardless of her slight *embon-point*, she became suddenly lighter, similar to a feather ready to fly away at the least breath.

“ These dead souls are—” pronounced the in every respect amiable lady.

“ What, what ?” interrupted her guest, full of emotion.

“ The dead serfs !”

“ Oh, speak ! for Heaven’s sake speak.”

“ They are simply a pretext, but the real truth is the following ; he intends to run away with the daughter of the Lord-Lieutenant of Smolensk.”

This conclusion was perfectly sudden and unexpected, and in every respect very extraordinary.

Scarcely had the simply amiable lady heard the conclusion her friend had arrived at, when she stood there like a statue, grew pale, pale as death, and this time really and seriously seemed to be distracted and bewildered. "Oh, good Heavens!" she exclaimed in a faint voice, "nothing in the world could ever have suggested such an idea to me!"

"As for my part," said the in every respect amiable lady, "I must inform you, that, scarcely had you opened your lips on the subject, when I already guessed the whole affair."

"And pray, dear Anna Grigorievna, what are we to think of her Majesty's institution? This young girl has been represented as innocence personified."

"What innocence! I heard her utter such language, as, I must confess, I would never have had courage to allow to pass my lips, even if I could have pronounced the words."

"Believe me, dear Anna Gregorievna, it is really heart-rending to behold to what a degree immorality has extended."

"The men seem mad about the girl. As for me, I must acknowledge, I can find nothing attractive in her—she is unbearably conceited."

"She is a perfect statue, my dearest Anna Grigorievna, and there is not the least expression in her face."

"Oh, she is awfully conceited! Oh, how affected! Good gracious, what affectation! I don't know who her instructor was, but I don't recollect having ever seen a young woman so full of affectation as she is!"

"My own heart, Anna Grigorievna! she is nothing but a living statue, and pale as death."

"Pray don't say that, my dearest Sophia Ivanovna; she uses rouge in an unchristian-like manner."

"No, no, my charming Anna Grigorievna, you are mistaken, she is as white as chalk, chalk of the purest white."

"My dearest, let me tell you, that I sat close to her; I saw rouge, finger thick on her face, ready to fall off like plaster from a wall."

"It is her mother who has taught her, she is a flirt herself; but as for her daughter, I'm sure she will surpass her."

"Pray let me tell you, listen: I am ready to invoke any saint, or forfeit immediately my children, my husband, my whole fortune, but I must say, that there was not a particle, not a

shadow of rouge on that young girl's face at the last ball !”

“ Oh, how can you say so, Sophia Ivanovna,” exclaimed the in every respect amiable lady, as she clapped her hands together.

“ Oh, how very strange you are, my dearest Anna Grigorievna ! I cannot help looking with surprise at you !” said the simply amiable lady, clapping her hands together.

It will not appear strange to our reader, that there was a difference of opinion between the two ladies on the same subject, and which they had both seen at the same time. There are really many things in this world, which have such a peculiarity ; if they are looked at by one lady, they will appear as perfectly white as snow, and again, if examined by another, they will seem red, as red as even Russian cranberries.

“ By the bye, I can give you another proof, that she has been using *blanc* instead of *rouge*,” continued the simply amiable lady ; “ now I recollect distinctly the circumstance, that made me mention my assertion. I was sitting next to Mr. Maniloff, and said to him, “ Only see, Sir, how pale she looks ! really, one must be as

crazy as our men are to find anything attractive in her. But how about our gay deceiver, the stranger. Oh, you have no idea how much he has displeased me! You cannot imagine, my dear Anna Grigorievna, to what degree he has displeased me."

"However, it would seem, that there are ladies to whom he has not been indifferent."

"To me, Anna Grigorievna! I'm sure, you could never say that of me. Never, never!"

"No, my dearest, I do not speak of you, but there are also other ladies."

"Never, never, Anna Grigorievna! Allow me to assure you, that I know myself very well indeed; had it perhaps been the case with one of our ladies who presume to play the *rôle* of unapproachables?"

"I beg your pardon, Sophia Ivanovna! And I beg leave also to tell you, that such calumnies have never been expressed to me before. He has perhaps been flirting with some one else, but not with me, certainly not with me, allow me to assure you of that."

"But, my dearest, why do you seem offended? you seem to forget that there were many other ladies besides ourselves, and even such ladies,

who were the first to seize upon a chair near the door, for the purpose of sitting near him.”

After such an exchange of opinions, and especially after the last remarks of the simply amiable lady, it seemed evident, that a storm would follow; however, to our utmost surprise, both ladies remained perfectly silent, and absolutely nothing followed as a consequence. The in every respect amiable lady seemed to remember, that the pattern of the new dress to be worn with festoons was not yet in her possession; and as for the simply amiable lady, she also seemed to recollect, that she had not yet obtained from her intimate friend any distinct comments upon the discovery about the stranger, which she had revealed to her, and for these excellent reasons and reflections peace soon again returned between them.

However, it is impossible to say that there was any natural disposition in the two ladies to create ill-feeling of any kind, and in general there was nothing in their character that could be really called maliciousness; nevertheless, and yet accidentally, slight differences would arise between them in the course of conversation, and inspire them with the innocent wish to

pique one another slightly ; it therefore did happen occasionally that the one or the other would profit by an opportunity, and gratify herself by launching an insinuation or observation against the other. The cravings of the human heart are as numerous as incomprehensible in the heart of man, as well as in the heart of a woman.

“ However, I cannot understand it at all,” said the simply amiable lady to her friend, “ how Tchichikoff, being a stranger here and a traveller, could venture to enter upon such an expedition alone. It is impossible—I cannot believe it: he must have some accomplices.”

“ And did you really think he had none ?”

“ Whom do you suspect ? Who could assist him ?”

“ And why should it not be Nosedrieff himself ?”

“ Now really, could it be Nosedrieff ?”

“ Why not ? He is just the man for such an undertaking. Don’t you know that he wanted to sell his own father, or, better still, gamble for him at cards ?”

“ Goodness gracious ! what interesting news I am going to hear from you ! I could never

have imagined that Nosdrieff could have been compromised in this affair or conspiracy."

"And I imagined it from the very beginning."

"When you come to think of it, it is really wonderful what happens in this world. Whoever could have anticipated it, especially when you recollect that Tchichikoff, since his arrival in Smolensk has had scarcely sufficient time to look about him, and here he is on the eve of creating a sensation in our town unequalled in the annals of the Russian Empire since Ivan Vasilievitch the Terrible. Ah, my dear Anna Grigorievna, if you could only imagine how terribly frightened and perplexed I feel now, and certainly, without your sympathy and friendship I should have been on the very brink of my grave—I should indeed. Maschinka, my chambermaid, made the remark that I was as pale as death. 'Darling ladyship,' says she to me, 'you are as pale as death. 'Maschinka,' was my reply, 'that must not now be a matter of preoccupation with me.' Such then is the fact. Even Nosdrieff is implicated. Well, I'm sure, I never could have believed it."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE simply amiable lady felt an irrepressible desire to ascertain if possible all the details of Tchichikoff's conspiracy, that is to say the particular day and hour, in fact, she wished to know a very great deal indeed. The in every respect amiable lady simply declared that she knew nothing positive on the subject. She did not know how to invent a falsehood ; to anticipate something was another question with her, and then it was only advanced when her suppositions were based upon intimate conviction. When, therefore, she felt inwardly convinced in her opinion, it was that she knew how to defend her argument, and daring indeed would have

been the man or learned advocate who would have tried to dissuade her from her opinion once fixed, whatever cleverness or learnedness a lawyer might be possessed of; and though he be able to boast that he could defeat the opinions of any adversary, he would have stood no chance with our in every respect amiable lady, such would have been the proofs of intimate conviction which she could have exhibited to him.

Both ladies at last perfectly agreed upon the point, that that which they had at first laid down as a supposition had still remained a pre-supposition; and in that there is indeed nothing surprising. Men of our profession, for example, learned men, at least such we believe ourselves to be, and nearly on the same principle as these two amiable ladies; and as a proof of it we may only allude to our learned critics. In the beginning, such a learned gentleman starts with his task like a sneaking flatterer; he begins timidly, with moderation, in fact he begins with the most innocent question: is this not a quotation? or, is this not a copy from such and such a page? or, does this document not belong to such and such an age? or, are we not to

trace these people as the descendants of such and such a nation ?

And now they begin to refer and quote, the authority of numerous ancient authors ; but scarcely have they discovered a point to rest upon, if ever so unimportant, when he already feels spirited and courageous, begins to converse freely with the ancient genius, and even addresses questions to him, which, of course, he thinks proper to answer himself immediately, forgetting altogether that he begun with a timid presupposition ; it now seems to him that he sees all, that every particular is clear to him ; and his review is concluded with the words—it was thus then that it happened, these people are the descendants of such and such a nation ; and it is, therefore, upon this particular point that we must base our judgment, and look upon the subject. It is thus that a novelty is proclaimed, as if from the pulpit, and the new truth ushered into the world, where it is sure to find numerous followers and advocates.

At the time when the two ladies had so happily and sagaciously decided this very complication, the Imperial Procurator, with his always impassible countenance, heavy eye-brows,

and winking eyes, entered the reception-room, and was immediately ushered into the presence of the two intimate friends. Both ladies, as if for a wager, endeavoured to explain to him, at the same time, all the particulars of Tchichikoff's conspiracy ; they spoke to him of the sale and purchase of dead serfs, of the projected elopement with the Lord-Lieutenant's daughter, so that they completely confused his judgment ; he stood there as if riveted to the spot, winking his left eye more than his right, and passing his pocket-handkerchief across his face and nose, wiping off the snuff ; but he could understand absolutely nothing.

The two ladies left the Imperial Procurator thus standing, and went to carry the news, and create a revolution in the ancient town of Smolensk. This enterprise they succeeded in carrying out in no less than half-an-hour. The town was soon in a perfect uproar ; every one was soon revolutionised, but nobody could understand anything about the cause. The two ladies spread such a mist over the eyes of all, that all, especially the civilians, became, as it were, petrified for some time.

Their position, in the first moments, was

similar to that of a sleepy schoolboy, whose comrades, taking advantage of his somnolence, had risen earlier, and placed an hussar in his nose, namely, a small paper cornet, containing snuff. Whilst fast asleep, he inhales all the snuff through his nostrils with the ease of a snorer; he awakens suddenly, jumps from his bed, looks about like a fool, rubs his eyes repeatedly, and cannot make out where he is, and what has happened to him; he then only perceives that it is late, and that the rays of the sun are shining brightly on the wall of his room; he hears the laughter of his schoolfellows, hiding themselves in the corners, the daylight entering his window, shining over the dark forest in the distance—hears the thousand voices of birds gaily humming in the garden—sees the silvery stream beneath, with its pleasant footpaths, planted on either side with their tall poplars—beholds numerous other little children playing about, and ready to plunge into the water for a bath; and then only, and at last, he feels convinced that he has had a hussar placed in his nose.

Such was exactly, at first, the position of all the inhabitants of any note in the town of Smolensk on that eventful morning. Every

one of them stopped suddenly short like sheep, and opened their eyes widely. Dead serfs, the Lord-Lieutenant's daughter, and Tchichikoff were continually buzzing round them, and confusing their heads in a most extraordinary manner; and, later only, after the first stupefaction was over, they seemed to distinguish and separate the one from the other. They began to question themselves and feel angry, because they saw that they could not explain the affair to themselves any way.

“What does this parable really mean? what parable are these dead serfs? there is no logic in dead serfs, how could any one think of buying dead serfs? where could such a fool be met with, and for what speculation could he purchase them and thus invest his capital? and to what end and for what purpose could dead serfs be made available? and why is the Lord-Lieutenant's daughter mixed up in the affair? If he intended eloping with his Excellency's daughter, why can he have bought these dead serfs? and if he wanted only to purchase dead serfs, why should he want to run away with his Excellency's daughter? surely, he did not intend to present her with dead serfs at their nuptials!

But what is the nonsense they have now spread all over the town? what is the meaning for all this? for scarcely has a person had time to turn and look about, when they already concoct a whole history on his account; well and good if there was any sense in it—however, they have spread the news, and certainly there must be something at the bottom of it. But what cause, what reason can there be for these dead serfs? I really cannot see any reason or cause for them whatever. It is really bewildering! maddening!”

In a word, there was a talk about it all over the town, a regular round of talking, about the dead serfs and his Excellency's daughter, about Tchichikoff and the dead serfs, about his Excellency's daughter and Tchichikoff, and all was soon in a maze. It seemed that the hitherto slumbering town rose like a buoyant whirlpool. All the old home-keeping men and women, who had not divested themselves of their morning-gowns nor had been in the streets, heaven knows for how long time, now suddenly began to stir about and swear, the one at the tailor for having made his coat too narrow, the other at the boot-maker for having made his boots too tight, a

third at the neglect and drunkenness of his servants, and so forth.

All those who had long ceased to receive or go into company, and were known only accidentally to each other, now suddenly made their appearance again in the world, as if they had risen from the dead; in fact, all those who could not even be enticed with turtle soup or a sturgeon feast, or with any other dainties that melted in the mouth; in a word, it was now proved beyond a doubt that the ancient town of Smolensk was a large and well populated town. The streets were crowded with old-fashioned droshkies of every description—in a word, the porridge began to boil over.

At another time, and under different circumstances, similar reports would not have attracted the least attention; but the town of Smolensk had been, as it was for some time, deprived of any novelty. Three months had passed away without the occurrence of anything like *com-mérage*, which, as it is well-known, is to a town as necessary as supplies to an army. In the circles of the gossips of Smolensk, there arose suddenly two perfectly distinct opinions, and in consequence two perfectly distinct parties

were formed; the party of the men and the party of the women.

The party of the men, the most foolish of the two, turned their attention to the dead serfs. The party of the women again, busied themselves exclusively with the elopement of the Lord-Lieutenant's daughter. In the party formed by the women, we must observe to the credit of the ladies, that there was considerably more order, regularity, and perspicuity. They seem to have been born to be excellent and careful managers. All soon assumed with them a lively and orderly appearance, presented itself in distinct and visible forms, explained itself, freed itself from every doubt; in a word, all seemed as perfect as a picture.

It was proved that Tchichikoff had already been in love with the fair girl for some time, and that they had met by appointment on several occasions at night in the garden by moonlight, and that his Excellency himself would have consented to their marriage, because Tchichikoff was as rich as a Jewish banker, if it had not been for Tchichikoff's wife, whom he had deserted (how they had managed to find out that our hero was married, no one

could tell), and that his wife, who was tormented by an unreciprocated passion for him, had addressed the most entreating letter to the Lord-Lieutenant, and that Tchichikoff, finding that the father and mother would never consent to their union, determined upon an elopement.

In some other circles, the same affair was commented upon with a few slight deviations. It was said that Tchichikoff had no wife at all, but that he, as a clever man of the world, and determined to carry his object, undertook, with the object in view, of obtaining the hand of the daughter, to make the beginning with the mother, and that there existed between them a secret sentimental *liaison*, and after this success with the mother, he had stepped forward to demand the hand of the daughter; but the mother, fearing or alarmed lest an offence against religious principles might be committed, and feeling within her own heart the pangs of remorse, refused his demand peremptorily, and that in consequence of this refusal, Tchichikoff had determined upon an elopement. To all this, were added many explanations and improvements as the reports spread by degrees,

until at last they were known and commented upon, even in the narrowest streets of Smolensk.

The lower classes of society, in Russia at least, are very fond of talking of the affairs of the more elevated classes, and for that reason, the same subject was even discussed in such houses where the inhabitants had never heard, or seen anything of Tchichikoff before, and of course they made new additions and improvements. The subject became every moment more and more embellished, and every new day added considerably to the perfections of its forms, until at last it was transmitted with all its perfections to the ears of her Excellency, the wife of the Lord-Lieutenant of Smolensk.

Her Excellency, as a mother of a family, as the first lady in the town, ultimately as a lady who never suspected or anticipated anything similar, felt perfectly insulted by these rumours, and legitimately flew into a passion.

The unhappy *blondine* had to submit to a very unpleasant *tête-à-tête*, indeed such a one as perhaps a young girl of sixteen years of age, never underwent before. Streams of questions rapidly flowed from the lips of the angry mo-

ther, followed in succession by strict examination, reproaches, threats and exhortations, so that the poor young girl began to cry bitterly without being able to understand a word of the real causes of her mother's anger and indignation.

The porter at the lodge also received positive instructions never to admit for the future, under any circumstances or pretences, the gentleman calling himself Tchichikoff.

CHAPTER XX.

HAVING, as it were, finished their affair with her Excellency, the ladies felt inclined to join the party of the gentlemen, with the view of bringing them round to their own opinion, and they continued to affirm that the alleged purchase of dead serfs was nothing else but a scheme to divert attention from his real intentions, and thus more successfully to accomplish the projected elopement.

Many of the gentlemen were even gained over, and persuaded to join the female party, notwithstanding the bitter reproaches that were addressed to them by their own party and comrades, who called them old women and

petticoat worshippers, which allegations, as is well known, are very offensive to any gentleman.

But, however strong and obstinate the remaining coalition of the men was, their party was far from being so well organised as that of the ladies. With them all was somehow irregular, rough, loose, not well at all; their heads were full of confusion, partiality, contradiction; their thoughts tormented by doubts and suspicions—in a word, the, in every respect, empty nature of the men appeared to be in the greatest disorder, a *naturel*, at the same time rough and heavy, unfit for household matters, nor for the more tender impressions of the heart, suspicious, indolent, full of continual doubts and eternal apprehensions.

They maintained most obstinately that all was stuff and nonsense, that the elopement with his Excellency's daughter was more likely to be undertaken by a dashing hussar, but not by a peaceable civilian; and that Tchichikoff was not the man to carry out such a plan, so full of madness; that the women were all silly, and had got up a false alarm; that the real object upon which they had to turn their exclusive

attention were the dead serfs themselves, for it was with them that the secret lay buried ; but what this secret was, the devil alone knew, at any rate in their opinion, it was something awful. Why it was so dreadful, so awful, in the opinion of the gentlemen, we shall know at once.

By a decree of his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas I, another Lord-Lieutenant, or Governor had been appointed for the province of Smolensk, and the present one recalled to St. Petersburg ; such an ukase causes in Russia a thorough change of administration and appointments, and for this reason it had the most alarming effect upon the nervous and moral system of the Imperial *employés* ; Courts of Inquiries would be held in all branches of administration, many of them had the prospect before them of being dismissed, whilst others ran the risk of seeing themselves utterly stripped of their little profits under the new head of administration.

And really, some of them thought, “ if the new Governor was to know all our little trespasses, it would be quite sufficient to effect our complete disgrace, and perhaps even banishment

would be the consequence." The Superintendent of the Imperial Hospitals grew suddenly pale; heaven knows what thoughts flashed across his mind; did these dead serfs mean, perhaps, that all those people who died lately in great numbers from cholera and various fevers in the Imperial Hospitals and other places, for want of proper and careful sanitary measures, and was Tchichikoff, by chance, an Imperial Attorney, or Commissioner sent by the Governor-General to hold a secret Court of Inquiry.

He communicated this opinion to the President of the Council. The President answered that this supposition was absurd, and then immediately grew pale himself as he put to himself the following question:

"But if these serfs whom Tchichikoff has been purchasing were really dead, he has caused us all to legalise the transaction, and has obliged me to sign the contract of sale as Pluschkin's agent, and if the whole transaction is reported with all its particulars to the Governor-General, how then? And if the Governor-General lays all the particulars of this transaction before His Majesty the Emperor? I shudder at the thought."

He communicated these apprehensions to the one and to the other, and immediately after, the one and the other grew pale as death. Fear is like a contagious disorder; it communicates itself in an instant. All the Imperial *employés* suddenly discovered in themselves such transgressions as did not even exist in reality. The words "dead serfs" spread fear and terror all around, which were instantaneously communicated to all who were even in the slightest degree compromised in the transaction; they began also to suspect that it might be an allusion to some recent occurrences in which a few peasants died suddenly, and were buried hurriedly without an inquest being held on their bodies.

The first occurrence was an encounter between some tradesmen from Great Novgorod and some men of the same calling from Little or Nishni-Novogorod, who had come to visit the fair held at that time in Smolensk. After having done a good business in town, the Great Novogorodians gave a regular Russian feast to their friends the little Novogorodians, seasoned with all the foreign improvements of kitchen and cellar. The feast, however, ended in a regular fight. The petty jealousies existing between these two

very important towns determined the Little Novogorodians to resent an old quarrel which had been brought again on the *tapis* as regarded the pre-eminence of the two towns, in a commercial sense. They rushed upon the Great Novogorodians, determined to have their lives ; but the result was, that they got fearfully ill-used by the Great Novogorodians, who disfigured their heads, faces and sides in a most merciless manner, and proved that the fists of some of the defunct Great Novogorodians were of an extraordinary size and hardness.

One of the defeated combatants had fared very badly indeed, and narrowly escaped losing his life ; however, he had got off only after having had his nose flattened like a crumpet, so much so indeed that there remained but a vestige of a nose on his face. The merchants confessed to the authorities that they had been only jesting ; but it was rumoured about that in this serious conflict, four of the Imperial peacemongers had lost their lives. However, the real loss of life was kept in the dark, and the inquiries that were held by the proper authorities went to show that the deceased Novogorodians had died from the effects of

suffocation and they were at once buried as suffocated people.

The other occurrence, which happened nearly at the same time, was the following: Some crown serfs (property of the Emperor) of the not unimportant village of Vladomirsk, had joined their brethren and neighbours in the adjoining village of Volkonsk, for the purpose of taking revenge upon an imperial steward, who resided between the two villages, and who not only ill-treated them in the most barbarous manner, but even seduced by threats and intimidation, their wives and daughters. This same imperial steward, Drobriaschkin by name, had been observed to pay too frequent visits in both villages, and at unusual hours, which was thought highly improper by the peasants for an imperial manager, and head of the country police. It, therefore, seemed to them that their magistrate had too many weaknesses for their wives and daughters.

However, nothing positive could be proved against him, although the imperial serfs had stated in their depositions, that they had seen their magistrate roaming about in the neighbourhood like a cat, and that they had more

than once given him fair warning, and that on one occasion they had even beaten and driven him out of the hut of one of their worthiest elders, where he had stealthily entered, Heaven knows for what purpose. The magistrate merited, of course, chastisement for the weaknesses of his heart, and ought not to have imagined, that because he was an imperial manager, he could presume to trample upon the affections of imperial serfs; on the other hand again, the peasants of the imperial villages of Vladomirsk and Volkonsk, could also not have been justified in murdering their magistrate for his weaknesses of the heart, provided the charge could have been proved against one or all of them.

However, this occurrence also remained in the dark, because all matters in which the police and people of high rank are interested, remain in Russia usually enveloped in darkness; nevertheless, the country magistrate, the imperial manager, was found murdered on the high road, his official coat was torn into rags, and as for his face and body, it was perfectly impossible to identify them as having once harboured the haughty and tyrannical soul of a Dobriaschkin.

The whole occurrence, with all its particulars, was thrown into the proper courts of justice, and ultimately transmitted to Smolensk, where the high justices of the Crown came to the following conclusion :

“Whereas it cannot be proved who of the imperial serfs are the actual murderers of the dead man, and as there are many peasants compromised in the crime, and whereas Dobriaschkin was now a dead man, there could arise not the least advantage to him, in having judgement given in his favour.

“And, whereas all the peasants compromised in the deed were still alive, it was of the greatest importance to them, that judgment should be given in their favour ; it was therefore decided that the following judgment or verdict should be returned ;

“That the imperial manager and magistrate, Dobriaschkin, was himself the cause of his death, in making unjustifiable pretensions upon the imperial serfs of the villages of Vladomirsk and Volkonsk, and that he died suddenly from an apoplectic stroke, whilst returning home in his sledge.”

The imperial men who had thus settled these

and similar occurrences, thought at the time that their decisions were just and right, but now, and it is incomprehensible why, they thought that the present dead souls had some reference to these past occurrences. To these past events which seemed to them now more serious than ever before, additional difficulties could arise, for, if it was to happen, that just at this time when all the *employés* of the Crown seemed so seriously embarrassed, the new Governor-General was to receive at once two more informations in the shape of the following documents.

The first, containing a report of investigations and proofs that a manufacturer of false bank-notes was residing in Smolensk, hiding himself under different assumed names, and that a strict investigation should be made at once to bring the culprit to light ; the greatest discredit would be thrown at once upon the *employés* whose duty it would have been to prevent the occurrence.

The other document, again might contain the following communication from the Governor-General of the adjoining province ; whereas a murderer has escaped the hands of justice, and taken refuge in the Government of Smolensk,

It devolves upon the Imperial *employés* of the Province of Smolensk to take at once the necessary steps for his immediate apprehension, and stop all such persons who cannot legitimate themselves with the necessary documents and passports.

These two imaginary, or perhaps, true documents, completely bewildered all. Their former apprehensions were completely lost sight of. Of course, it was perfectly impossible for them to suspect for a moment that these documents could have any reference, whatever, to their friend Tchichikoff, however, as they at last began to reason a little each for himself, it struck them at last that they could not positively tell, who and what Tchichikoff really was, and that he had given them a very indistinct account of himself, though he had told them, that he had suffered much for the just cause whilst in active service.

All this seemed to them now, not at all clear, or explicit at all, and especially when they recollected that he had told them also, that he had many enemies ready to feed on his very life's blood, it was then that they became still more thoughtful and pre-occupied ; it must therefore

be that his life was in danger, consequently he must have been doing something to put himself into such a jeopardy—and now the question arose among them, who was Tchichikoff really?

Of course, he could not be a manufacturer of false bank notes, nor could he be a murderer, because his appearance was in every respect that of a gentleman; nevertheless, who and what is he? And now only it was that the imperial *employés* of Smolensk addressed themselves the question, which they ought to have asked immediately in the beginning of their acquaintance with our hero. It was resolved upon, that some more inquiries should be made about him, from those persons from whom he had bought those dead serfs, thus to ascertain, if possible, what the nearer particulars of these purchases were, and what they would have to understand by the term of dead serfs, to know whether he had not inadvertently perhaps allowed a few remarks, or hints to slip from his tongue, of what his real intentions were, and if some of the contracting parties did not know something more positive about him.

First of all they applied to Lady Korobotchka, but from her they did not learn much; he had

purchased her dead serfs for the paltry sum of fifteen silver roubles, had promised to buy some feathers and honey from her, and had stated that he was a contractor for the supply of tallow and grease, and for that reason was no doubt an impostor, for she had had already dealings with a man, who bought feathers and honey, and contracted for the supply of tallow and grease, and that that man had taken them in one and all, and cheated the wife of the proto-pope of two hundred silver roubles. Whatever else she said on the subject, was nothing but a repetition of her first statement, and the *employés* came to the conclusion that Lady Korobotchka, was nothing but a stupid, gossiping old woman.

Maniloff declared, that for his friend, Pavel Ivanovitch, he was ready to be as responsible as for himself, that he would sacrifice all his property if he could but possess the hundredth part of the good qualities of his friend Pavel Ivanovitch, in fact, he spoke of him in the most flattering terms, adding a few of his opinions on friendship and intimacy; this he did of course while shutting gently his sweet eyes. These expressions, of course, convinced the *employés* of the tenderness of Maniloff's

heart, but were not at all calculated to enlighten them on the subject in question.

Sobakevitch affirmed, that Tchichikoff was a honest man, and that the serfs he had sold him were picked men, and in every respect perfectly alive; but that he could not be held responsible for what might happen in the course of time, that if they were to die in consequence of their emigration, which would be fraught with difficulties and dangers, that this would not be his fault, but the decrees of Providence; and as for fever and other mortal diseases, they were prevalent all over the world, and he knew of instances where such diseases had devastated a whole village in three days.

The imperial gentlemen had recourse to one last resource, though, we must confess, not a very gentlemanly act; though there are instances when it is done through the medium of an acquaintance with the servants of the persons interested; they, therefore, hit upon the idea of questioning Tchichikoff's attendants, asking them indirectly what they know of the former life, habits, and fortune, of their lord and master; but even with them they found themselves disappointed.

Petruschka communicated to them only the peculiar perfume of his bed-chamber ; as for Selifan, he confided to them that his master had been in the imperial service, and had done his duty in the excise ; but this is all they could learn from him. This latter class of people, namely, servants, have very peculiar habits, and might, in some degrees, stand a comparison with Irishmen. If you ask them a direct question, they are sure to give an indirect answer—never recollect anything—their mind is so much confused that they will simply answer, ‘ that they knows nothingabout anything;’ but if you happen to deviate from your original question, and speak of something else, they are sure to return to the original question ; and, whether you like it or not, they will give you all the desired particulars, even such as you do not care to listen to.

All the researches and inquiries of the imperial men, proved in the end, that they had no positive information about Tchichikoff ; nevertheless, they came to the conclusion that he must be something. They decided, at last, upon talking the matter over once more, and settle, definitely, how to act in this very com-

plicated affair—what measures they would have to take in order to ascertain, positively, who Tchichikoff really was ; whether he was a man who ought to be apprehended at once as a malefactor, or whether he was a man who had the power and authority to seize and apprehend them as malefactors.

For this purpose it was agreed upon, that they should assemble all the next day at the house of the Commissioner of the Police, who, as is well known to our readers, was the father and benefactor of all the inhabitants of the town of Smolensk.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next day the *employés* or officers of the crown, holding various appointments in the public offices of Smolensk, mustered in great numbers at the house of the Commissioner of Police, who was, as we have said before, the father and benefactor of all the inhabitants of the town. These gentlemen had now an opportunity of making the observation, that they had considerably changed in appearance since the preceding day, and that they looked pale and discomfited in consequence of their mental exertions.

And really, the appointment of a new Governor-General, the two documents containing such very serious information, coupled with the pre-

sent occurrence and the widely-spread reports about those dead serfs, were sufficient in themselves to effect such changes in their countenance and bodily appearance, for the coats of some of them fitted them by far too comfortably.

All had given way: the President of the Council was changed, and the Inspector of the Imperial and other hospitals seemed no longer the same man, and the unflinching Procurator even had undergone an alteration, nor could a certain Semen Ivanovitch, whose real family name never transpired, be called the same man; he had the mania of showing off most cleverly a large finger ring which he wore on his first finger, both to ladies and gentlemen, but now he seemed not even to be aware of its being still on the same finger.

Of course, there were some few, as there always will be, stout-hearted men among them; but their number was very limited indeed. The Postmaster-General seemed the only one who had not given way to the prevalent panic, which was evident in the countenances of all the others present. He alone had not undergone the least change in his continually even character, and

continued to behave as he was wont to do on similar occasions, by repeating his customary phrases.

“We know you, know you well, and what you are, you new Governor-General! Men of your description are changed and appointed three and four times in the course of a few years, but as for me Sirs, I have been sitting for these last thirty years in the same place.”

To this and similar observations, the others invariably used to reply :

“’Tis all very fine for you to *sprechen sie deutsch*, Ivan Andreitch ; your duty is a posting one; to receive and dispatch letters is your department, the only chance you have, is perhaps to close your office an hour sooner than you have a right, and extract late postages from our tradesmen, making them believe that you have a half-holiday, and that if you forward their letters, it is a favour you show them, or you send off a letter-bag which you ought to have kept back. Certainly with such easy tasks anybody could be a saint. And besides, though you are a married man, you have but one son and heir, but look upon me and my Praskovia Fedorovna, Heaven has blessed us uncommonly, for with

every year our family increases, and it is either another Praskovia or another Fedor, we have to welcome to this world. No, no, Procurator, if you were in our position, you would sing another tune."

Thus the others spoke to the Postmaster-General.

In the council assembled, at the present moment, it was very remarkable that there was a total absence of that indispensable requirement which is usually called common sense and order. And here, in this instance the author feels himself called upon to pass the observation, that somehow or another, we Russians are not fit for public meetings, and have no talent for public speaking. In all our public assemblies, beginning from the peasants' peaceful gatherings, up to the most scientific and learned committees, if there is not one leading head among them to guide them all, it is sure to happen that confusion occupies the chair. It is very difficult for us to say why it is thus; no doubt, such is the character of the nation, and the only successful assemblies which we know of, are those, which are called together for the purposes of general enjoyment,

such as eating, drinking, and dancing, as is customary in club-houses, and Vauxhalls—a foreign introduction.

But as for readiness and disposition, we are always ready, feel always ready for anything that is new. We are always ready, and at the first hint given, rush forward to establish benevolent institutions; institutions for the promotion of industry, agriculture, and heaven knows what description of institutions we are not ready to support. The object in view seems sublime, but there is this evil, the object remains in view, *en perspective*. It might perhaps be attributed to our sanguine beginning which makes us fancy that the object in view is accomplished by its beginning.

As an example we may here allude to a committee that was formed in the very town of Smolensk for the speedy relief of the peasantry suffering from famine. This committee had the laudable intention of affording considerable and immediate relief to the poor sufferers, and for that reason large subscriptions were made by the principal inhabitants. The gentlemen who had promoted this laudable undertaking resolved at once, that a grand dinner should be

given to the subscribers, and in honour of the promoters, including the high notables of the town; this public dinner absorbed the half of the money subscribed for the poor sufferers; for the remainder of the money, a splendidly furnished house was hired for the exclusive use of the gentlemen forming the committee, including fire and attendance for their lordships, and the result of the munificent subscriptions showed that there were about five roubles and a half to be divided among a few hundred hungry sufferers, and in the division of this sum, there were a few of the gentlemen forming the benevolent committee who could not agree, and every one gave his reason why! The committee at present assembled had met for quite a different purpose; it was formed in consequence of unavoidable necessity. No starving sufferers were here the object. The question concerned every man present personally; the question was one threatening woe to all, it was therefore indispensable that unanimity should reign predominant.

The result was far from being satisfactory. Saying nothing about the difference of opinions, which is natural to any assembly; in

the opinion of the council thus assembled, there was an undefinable inconsistency prevalent, and loudly expressed : the one said " that Tchichikoff was the manufacturer of the false bank notes," and then immediately added, " however, I might be mistaken ;" another insisted upon it " that Tchichikoff was the private secretary, and the right-hand of the new Governor-General, and then concluded with the observation—" however, I could not swear to it, for it is not stamped on his forehead, that he is the man I take him to be."

As to the supposition that he might be the murderer in disguise, all pronounced unanimously their disbelief ; because they found, that excepting his personal appearance, which bespoke him to be a well disposed gentleman, there had been nothing in his manners or language to justify them in suspecting him of being such a mean and criminal offender.

Suddenly, the Postmaster-General, after having remained for several minutes buried in his usual musings and reflexions, whether in consequence of a sudden inspiration that seemed to overcome him, or from any other cause, ex-

claimed quite unexpectedly—"do you know, gentleman, who this man is?"

The voice in which he pronounced these words had something of a terrifying tone, for it made all present startle, and shout at the same time—"who is he?"

"Gentlemen, this man is—it is nobody else but Capitän Kopeikin himself!"

And when all in one voice asked again—"but who is the Capitän Kopeikin?" the Postmaster General said:

"So you do not know who the Capitän Kopeikin is?"

All answered at once "that they did not know who the Capitän Kopeikin was, nor had they ever heard of him before."

"Capitän Kopeikin," continued the Postmaster General, as he opened his snuff-box only half-way for fear, lest one or the other of his neighbours should venture to put his fingers in it, the cleanliness of which he very much suspected. "Capitän Kopeikin," said the Postmaster, after having had already his pinch of snuff, "if I was to tell you who he is, it would be long and interesting enough for a novel."

All present expressed a wish to know the history of the Capitän, because they took it for granted it would be that of Tchichikoff himself ; and the Postmaster-General announced his readiness to comply with their request, and began in the following terms :—

“Capitän Kopeikin was, at the time I am speaking of, one of the most valiant officers in the Russian service. In his last campaign against the Turks he stood, with his brave company, before the very gates of Adrianople, where he lost an arm and a leg, swearing at the same time that it was a shame on the part of the commanding generals to prevent them entering Adrianople as conquerors, and proceeding at once to Constantinople, which would have been a mere joke for them, and which they would have eventually to do. However, peace was proclaimed at Adrianople, and with one leg and one arm less he proceeded.”

“But pardon me, Ivan Andreitch,” the Commissioner of Police, interrupted him, “before you proceed any farther with the history of your Capitän Kopeikin, allow me to observe to you that our stranger, Tchichikoff, boasts of very strong and healthy-looking legs and arms,

and, according to your own words, Capitän Kopeikin, lost of each one, before the very gates of Adrianople."

Here the Postmaster-General shouted out, and struck himself a violent blow at his forehead, calling himself in public, and in the presence of all assembled, "a stupid old ass." He could not explain it to himself, how a similar circumstance did not strike his attention at the very beginning, and he confessed that the old proverb was perfectly true, that a Russian was very strong in after-thoughts.

However, a few minutes later, he tried immediately to amend his blunder, and if possible to get out of the scrape in which he had placed himself, saying, that at the last Universal Exhibition in England, where mechanism had been carried to the highest perfection, a certain Mr. Brown had invented a pair of mechanical legs, which, if touched in a particular place, where an invisible spring was fixed, would carry a man, Heaven knows how far, so far indeed, that it would be perfectly impossible to find him again anywhere.

However, this explanation was not sufficient to make them believe that Capitän Kopeikin and

Tchichikoff were the same person ; and they agreed that the Postmaster-General's explanations were too far fetched.

After this last suggestion it will not seem surprising at all that the gentlemen assembled began to reflect more seriously on the subject ; however, after a little while they began to rally again, finding that their imagination was at a loss for something more probable.

Thinking, and thinking again, and after mature reflections, they came to the conclusion, that it would be advisable to question Nosedrieff on the subject ; as he had been the first to bring the dead serfs on the tapis, and as he seemed to be in every respect on very intimate terms with Tchichikoff, it was consequently clear to them, that he was the most likely person to give them some more positive information regarding Tchichikoff's past life ; they therefore decided on seeing and questioning Nosedrieff without any further delay.

CHAPTER XXII.

THIS resolution, the last they had come to, was a very strange one indeed, because they knew perfectly well that Nosedrieff was a professed story-teller, and it was impossible to believe a word of what he said, and that he could in no way be depended upon even in the merest trifle ; nevertheless, and perhaps for that very reason, they rushed away to have recourse to him. Humanity is strange indeed ! Many a man doubts Providence, but believes steadfastly that if the bridge of his nose itches, he is sure to die soon ; he will leave unnoticed the creation of a genius, clear as noon-day, full of consistencies, perfect in its simplicity and truth, to throw himself upon the humbug invented or advanced

by a charlatan, and believe and trust in it blindly, and exclaim at the same time, "This is the real representative of the secrets of the heart!" or, having never paid in his life a copek to a physician, he will in the extremest case apply to an old woman-quack, who cures with simples and incantations like a witch, or who boils down some drugs, which, heaven knows why, he fancies to be the very remedy for his complaint.

Of course, and in some degree the imperial *employés* might in many respects be excused, for they really were in one of the most unpleasant and embarrassing positions, as regarded their character and reputation. The drowning man, it is said, catches even at a straw, because at the time of his danger he has not the faculty of judging that a fly only could perhaps save its life on a straw, and that, as for himself, he weighed at least his twelve to sixteen stone, if not more; however, this reflection seems not to occur to the drowning man, and for that reason he catches at a straw.

Thus it was also with our gentlemen assembled; they at last resolved on catching at Nosdrieff. The Commissioner of Police dropped

him a line instantly, inviting him to pass the evening with them, and his assistant courier in his long top-boots and rosy cheeks, rushed immediately out into the street, to take the message to Nosdrieff. Nosdrieff was engaged on very important business ; for four consecutive days he had not left his room ; he permitted no one to quit the house, and received his dinner through the window ; in a word, he had grown feeble and emaciated.

His business demanded the most persevering attention ; it consisted in the selection of from more than ten dozen packs of cards, of one select pack, upon which he might be able to depend as upon his most intimate friend. The work he had before him was sufficient to last him yet for two weeks longer ; for the course of this time, Porphir had received instructions to take particular care of the young dog, and to wash him three times a day with a peculiar brush and plenty of soap.

Nosdrieff was very angry indeed that any one should have come to disturb his solitude ; at first he refused to listen at all to the Commissioner's messenger, but when he read the P.S. which informed him, that it was more than

likely that the evening party would be attended by a novice, and that there would be a little gambling, he dressed himself immediately, and left his solitude to comply with the invitation.

The appearance, testimony, and suppositions of Nodrieff presented such contradictory evidence that the gentlemen of the council were completely thrown out of their latest conclusion on the subject of their important investigations. Nodrieff was one of those men for whom suppositions and doubts did not exist, and whatever extent of indecision and timidity was perceptible in their conjectures, it was met by him with as much perseverance and conviction, and he answered every one of their inquiries without stammering even once, nor feeling in the least embarrassed.

He affirmed that Tchichikoff had bought dead serfs for a considerable amount, and that he himself had sold him some, because he could not see any harm in doing so. Upon the question, whether he did not believe him to be a spy sent from St. Petersburg to collect secret information regarding the administration of Smolensk, Nodrieff answered, that he was confident that his friend Tchichikoff was a spy

in the pay of the government, because, said he, when we were school-fellows we used to call him the *fiscal*, but at the same time, he got many a sound thrashing for it from us, and from myself in particular.

“I now remember a circumstance when we had so very much ill-used him that he was obliged to go home, and have immediately two hundred and forty leeches applied to his temples”—that is to say, he intended to make it forty, but the two hundred additional slipped from his tongue in spite of himself.

When he was asked whether he did not think that Tchichikoff was the manufacturer of false bank notes, he answered in the affirmative, and at the same time told them an anecdote of the great cleverness of Tchichikoff, saying, that it once so happened that he, Tchichikoff, being positively traced as the imitator of bank notes, and that he had about two millions worth in his possession, his house was immediately surrounded by a detachment of soldiers, each of the doors being sealed and guarded by two men, but during the same night Tchichikoff managed to change the two millions worth of spurious notes into genuine imperial bank bills.

To the direct question, whether Tchichikoff had really the intention of carrying out his elopement with the Governor-General's daughter, and whether it was true that he had undertaken to assist them in their flight, Nosedrieff replied, that he must confess, that he had particularly helped and assisted him, and that without him, they would not have had the least chance of success.

Here he perceived, but too late, that he had compromised himself by this statement, without, however, being able to stop the fluency of the tongue. However, it was also difficult to stop his talkativeness, because the subject in itself was one that presented so many interesting incidents, and he could not resist the temptation of inventing them; he even gave the name of the particular village, where the church stood on a hill surrounded by a small wood, through which they had to pass in order to proceed to the nuptial ceremony, the name of the pope who had to wed them before the altar, was father Sidor; for his services and discretion he was to receive a hundred roubles, but he at first declined to accede to their request, but that he, Nosedrieff, reminded the holy father that he had

married lately his peasant Michael to his cousin, Katinka, and which was an act contrary to the laws of the Greek church, and that if he refused to marry his friend and his lovely bride, he would at once inform against him, that he had put at their disposal his own carriage and horses, and that he had gone on horseback, from station to station to provide re-lay horses for the fugitives. He went even so far in his particulars as regarded the elopement, that he began to call out the names of every one of the yamtschicks who drove the carriage.

The Imperial men remained now in a worse position than they were in the beginning of their investigations, and the meeting was broken up, after they had fully agreed upon the fact, it was impossible to them to discover who Tchichikoff was.

All these reports, conjectures and gossips on account of Tchichikoff had, for some incomprehensible reasons, had the most fatal effect upon the constitution of the poor Imperial Procurator. They had acted upon him to such a degree, that he, on his return home from the meeting, from some cause or another fell down and was found to be dead. Whether it was a

paralytic stroke or any other that put a term to his existence is difficult to say, but the fact is, that when he sat down upon his chair, he had done so to rise no more.

But this is incredible, altogether inconsistent ! it is impossible that the Imperial *employés* could so foolishly alarm themselves ; imagine all such nonsense, thus deviate from the truth, when even a child could comprehend the matter. Thus will many of our readers think and re-proach us with having advanced an incredible occurrence, or call the imperial *employés* stupid fellows, because men are liberal in words like, fool and ass, and are ready and willing to apply them even twenty times a day, if their fellow creatures give them but a chance.

It is very easy for a reader to pass a judgment, considering that he has the whole plot before him, and is seated in his snug corner, occupying thus a perfectly independent position, from which he has the whole horizon at a glance before him, and sees, as it were, what is going on below him, where the creeping men see but that which is close before them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

As for Pavel Ivanovitch Tchichikoff, he had not the slightest idea of the reports that were circulating on his account, and, as if misfortunes never come alone, it so happened, that at this very time he was suffering from a severe cold in his face, and an influenza in his throat, both indispositions to which we are very subject in our larger towns. In order to avoid any danger to his life by this indisposition, from which Heaven preserve him ! and the fear that he might perhaps die in consequence without leaving any descendants behind him, he resolved upon staying at home for a few days.

During the course of these days, he kept continually using ointments, and rincing

his throat with warm milk and figs in it, the latter fruit he always used to eat when he had used the lotion, he also wore a small pillow on his face, filled with herbs and camphor. Wishing to occupy his leisure time as pleasantly as possible, he began to write over again the various lists of the dead serfs he had been purchasing, read a little of the "Wandering Jew," translated from the French, which he happened to find in his portmanteau, he reviewed and glanced over all the contents of his dressing-case, such as notes, visiting cards and invitations to weddings and funerals, some of them he even had the courage to read over twice, nevertheless, he soon got tired of continually doing the same thing.

He could not at all account for the fact, how it happened that he did not see a single visitor, when but a few days ago the droshkies and carriages of the imperial *employés* were continually standing and waiting in a line before the inn, among his most frequent visitors he was accustomed to see the carriage of the Postmaster General, the Procurator's, or the President of the Council.

He shrugged his shoulders at the thought of it as he was walking up and down his room, apply-

ing the poultice to his swollen cheek. At last, however, he felt considerably better, and was rejoiced, Heaven knows to what extent, when he saw a possibility before him of leaving the house and walking out into the fresh air. Without any further delay, he betook himself immediately to the process of dressing, opened his toilette case, poured some hot water into a glass, took his shaving brush and soap, and prepared to shave himself, for which process it had been long ago the highest time; because, feeling his beard with his hand, and then looking at it in the looking-glass before him, he could not help exclaiming: "What a forest-like beard I have got in a few days, to be sure." And really, though it could not have been called a forest, yet his cheeks and chin were thickly covered with what might be termed a neglected growth.

After having shaved carefully, he began to dress so quickly and lively, so that he nearly jumped out of his trowsers again. At last, he was perfectly dressed, he took up his *Eau de Cologne*, with which he sprinkled himself all over, and after putting on a warmer over-coat, and wrapping his cheek carefully in a silk handkerchief, he went out into the street.

His first walk out was like that of every person recovering from an indisposition ; he felt cheerful and well-disposed. All that his sight met, seemed gay and pleasant to look at, the houses, the passing multitude, the carriages and horses and even the running dogs.

His first morning visit he intended to pay to his Excellency the Governor-General of Smolensk. On his road to the house of the Lord-Lieutenant, many a thought crossed his mind. The fair *blondine* kept continually turning about in his head ; his fancy for her even began to roam, so much so that he could at last not help smiling at it himself. In such a pleasant disposition he arrived at the house of the Governor-General. He was on the point of taking off his over-coat in the hall, when the porter surprised him with the following unexpected information.

“ I have orders not to receive you, Sir.”

“ What, how, surely you don't recognise me again. You had better look me well in the face,” said Tchichikoff to the man.

“ How should I not know you again, Sir ? It is not the first time I have seen you in this house. But the instructions I have received

are very positive indeed; they refer to you alone; all other visitors are to be admitted as before."

"You don't mean that! Why me alone? what for?"

"Such are my orders, and I dare say it must be all right," said the porter, and added finally the words, "yes." After saying this, he remained coolly standing before Tchichikoff, showing no signs of his usual servility to hasten forward and help the guest of his master to take off his over-coat. It seemed, as he looked upon the stranger, that he thought, "Oho! if my master does not wish to receive you any more under his roof, you must have behaved badly, and be an impostor."

"Incomprehensible!" thought Tchichikoff to himself, and went immediately to wait upon his friend the President; but the President became so confused at the sight of our hero, that he could not speak two words intelligibly and uttered such nonsense that both felt at last perfectly ashamed of one another. As he left the house, Tchichikoff tried to explain to himself, on his road, what the President's words were meant to express, and especially a few

insinuations that had dropped in the course of their conversation, however he could explain nothing.

He then went to pay his visits to a few more, to the Commissioner of Police, to the Vice-Governor, to the Postmaster-General, but they either did not receive him, or if they did, at least, all spoke in such a strange manner, and in such incomprehensible terms, and seemed in his opinion at such a loss for anything reasonable to say, that he left them under the impression that they were wrong in their minds. He called upon a few more on his road home, thinking that he would at last be able to find out a real cause for their unwarrantable conduct ; however he could not discover any cause whatever.

Like a somnambulist he continued to wander about for some time in the streets of the town, perfectly incapable of deciding, whether it was he or the Imperial *employés* who had lost their senses.

It was already late in the evening when he returned to his hotel, which he had left in the early day, in such an excellent disposition, to chase away the annoyance he felt, he immediately

ordered some tea. Engaged with melancholy reflections on his suddenly changed position *vis-à-vis* his acquaintance in town, he began to pour out his tea, when the door of his room was suddenly opened, and he beheld Nosedrieff standing unexpectedly before him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“THE proverb says, ‘for a friend seven miles even are no distance,’” said Nosedrieff as he entered the room and took off his hat. “I was just passing the inn, saw a light in your room, thought to myself, I’ll call upon him, he is surely not in bed yet, and here I am. Ah, delightful! you have yet your tea on the table; I shall have great pleasure to take a cup with you. I have made a very indifferent dinner to-day, and feel the consequences even now. Just give orders to your servant to bring me a pipe. Where is your pipe?”

“I don’t smoke,” said Tchichikoff, dryly.

“Nonsense! as if I did not know that you

are an inveterate smoker. Halloa ! what's that fellow's name ? Halloa, Vachramei, where are you ?”

“ His name is not Vachramei, but Petruschka.”

“ How is this ? but you used to have a servant of the name of Vachramei formerly.”

“ I never had a servant of that name in my life.”

“ Just so, my friend Derebischkin has a Vachramei. By the bye, imagine only what a lucky fellow that Derebischkin is. An aunt of his, having quarrelled with her own son for marrying the daughter of one of her serfs, has disinherited him, and left the whole of her property to my friend Derebischkin. When I heard of it, I could not help wishing for a couple of such aunts. But what is the matter with you, my dear fellow, why have you become a stranger, and are no more seen among us ? Of course I know that you are sometimes engaged on scientific subjects, and like to play the original, and read and study, (why Nosedrieff came to the conclusion that our hero was fond of reading, and studying scientific subjects, is impossible for us to tell, and still less for Tchichikoff himself). “ Ah, my dear fellow Tchichikoff, if you could but

have witnessed it—it would have been excellent food for your satirical wit, (why Tchichikoff was possessed of satirical wit, it was also impossible to say.) Imagine only, my dear fellow, we were gambling a little the other evening at Lichatcheff's house, we had such a lark there! My friend Perependeiff, who was with me, said what a pity that our Tchichikoff is not with us, he would have heartily enjoyed the fun—(meanwhile it must be observed that Tchichikoff never in his whole life knew a man of the name of Perependeiff.) However, I hope, my dear fellow, you will agree with me, that you acted very ungentlemanly to me on the last occasion, when we played that game of draughts, in which I was the winner. Yes, my dear fellow, I cannot help saying, you regularly did me out of it. However, the devil knows I cannot get angry on any account. It is but recently, that I and the President. . . .

“Halloa! and by the bye, I must tell you, my dear fellow, that the whole town is against you, they are under the impression that you are a manufacturer of spurious bank notes, they pressed hard upon me, but I defended you like a brother, I made them believe we were school-

fellows, and that I knew your father ; you may depend upon it, my dear fellow, I made them swallow a regular blue pill."

"What do you say, I am suspected of making false bank notes?" exclaimed Tchichikoff in a fit of amazement, as he rose from his chair.

"But what pleasure could you also find in frightening them nearly out of their senses?" continued Nosedrieff. "I can assure you, my dear fellow, they are nearly all mad from fear; they believe you also to be a highwayman, and an imperial spy. As for the Procurator, the poor fellow died in consequence of your reputation, and is to be buried to-morrow. Will you attend the funeral? To speak the truth, they are horribly alarmed at the new Governor-General, who has been appointed by the Emperor. However, my dear fellow, I cannot help making the observation; but you play a hazardous game."

"What hazardous game do you mean?" Tchichikoff again asked, rather alarmed.

"Well, I mean your projected elopement with the present Governor-General's daughter. For my part, I must confess, I expected as much of you, by heavens I thought you would do it!

The first time I saw you both together at the ball, I thought to myself, I'm sure Tchichikoff is not the fellow to take so much trouble for nothing. However, allow me to tell you, that I do not exactly approve of your choice, I cannot find anything particularly attractive in that fair girl. I would have liked her cousin, Anastasia Bikousova better, she is a charming little thing !”

“ But stop, stop, what nonsense are you talking there ? What did you say—I was going to elope with the Lord-Lieutenant's daughter ?” Tchichikoff stammered, opening his eyes widely.

“ Well, my dear fellow, now don't you presume to be so very mysterious about the matter. I must confess, I came here with an intention. I am ready to assist you in the speculation. Be it so : I am willing to hold the nuptial crown over your head, I am ready to place my carriage and the relay horses at your disposal, but you must lend me a sum of five thousand roubles. I want them, I want them desperately, my dear fellow !”

During the whole time the prattling of Nosdrieff lasted, Tchichikoff continued to rub his

eyes, wishing to convince himself whether he was under the impressien of a dream, or whether he was listening to something in reality. Manufacturer of false bank notes, the elopement with the Governor-General's daughter, the death of the Imperial Procurator, which he was given to understand was caused by him, the appointment and speedy arrival of a new Lord-Lieutenant, all this was calculated to alarm him considerably. If matters have come to this point, he thought to himself, I have no reason to tarry any longer here, and it is the highest time for me to leave town immediately.

He tried to rid himself as soon as possible of Nosedrieff's company, in which he at last succeeded, but not without some considerable difficulty. He then called in his servant Selifan, and gave him instructions to be ready by the break of day, in order that they should have no impediments in leaving Smolensk by six o'clock in the morning, everything should be packed and ready, the britchka well greased, the horses cleaned, &c., &c.

Selifan answered: "very well, Pavel Ivanovitch," but remained nevertheless for a few moments immoveable at the door. Tchichikoff

ordered Petruschka to draw forward from under the bed his portmanteau, which was covered with a thick layer of dust, he began to assist his servant in the packing of all his property indiscriminately into it, such as stockings, shirts, and other clean and unwashed linen, boot-jacks, an almanack—all these effects were placed into the portmanteau as they happened to come under their hands ; he intended to have everything absolutely ready in the evening, so that nothing should prevent or delay his departure in the morning.

Selifan who had, as we before said, remained silently standing at the door, when he saw the preparation for his master's departure carried on so vigorously, at last left the room in a hurry.

Hurriedly, as hurriedly as it is possible to imagine it, he descended the staircase, imprinting the marks of his wet footsteps on the stairs, on arriving below he stopped short, and began to scratch the back of his head for a considerable time.

What this scratching of his head meant, or what it in general was meant for, is difficult to say, but it is a characteristic trait of persons in his condition. Was it the disappointment, that he would not be able to go the next evening.

once more with his brother servant across the street to the cellar like imperial dram-shop, or had it, perhaps, happened that he had already succeeded during their protracted sojourn in Smolensk, in forming a tender attachment of the heart with some neighbour's kitchen-maid, and that he would have to bid farewell to his fair girl, and that there would be an end to their tender conversation before the gate, where with his balalaika in his hand he used to give her an evening song.

Or, again was he simply sorry to leave a place to which he had just begun to accustom himself, and feel cozy and comfortable near the kitchen fire wrapped in his greasy sheep-skin, eating porridge and sour cabbage soup with fat meat-pies ; leave all these comforts for the purpose of travelling again in rain and storm, and be tossed about on his master's britchka ?

Heaven alone knows what it meant, but it has many and innumerable meanings with the Russian people, when they begin to scratch the back of their head.

CHAPTER XXV.

NOTHING, however, of all that Tchichikoff had projected on the preceding evening, so happened on the following morning. In the first instance, he awoke considerably later than he wished; this was the first annoyance. Scarcely had he risen from his couch, when he sent immediately to inquire whether the horses were harnessed and before the britchka, and whether all was ready for his departure, but he was informed that neither the horses nor the britchka, nor anything was ready for his immediate departure. This was the second annoyance.

He flew into a violent passion, and had at

first, the intention of treating our friend Selifan to something in the Russian fashion, for the disregard thus shown to his orders, however he preferred waiting impatiently to hear first what excuse he would come to offer. Soon after, Selifan made his appearance in the room, and his lord and master had the gratification of listening to the same language which is usually spoken by servants on similar occasions, when their masters are in a hurry to start on their journey without delay.

“Your glory, I must inform you that the horses will require to be shod.”

“Oh, you pig! you stupid blockhead! and why have you not told me of this before? Had you no time to do it?”

“As for time, I cannot complain of—But allow me also to tell you, Pavel Ivanovitch, that one of the wheels wants a new tyre very sadly indeed, the roads have become very bad during these last few rainy days. And will your glory allow me also to observe, that the driving-box of the britchka is altogether out of repair and shaky, so much so that I fear it will not hold together for more than two or three stations.”

"You rascal, you!" shouted Tchichikoff, raising his arms, and clapping his hands together, and approaching Selifan so closely, that he, prompted by fear of receiving an unpleasant treat, stepped hastily backwards, and remained at a respectful distance.

"Do you want to kill me? aye? do you wish to cut my throat? Have you formed a conspiracy to slaughter me on the high road? you robber, you infernal pig you, you marine monster, you! For three weeks and more you have been sitting here at your ease, but the thought could never come into your blockhead to think of this before? ah? but now at the eleventh hour you put your nose at last upon it! how am I now to get in and drive off? eh? such is always the case with you, you rascal, and now you have let me again in a mess! ah? ah? But you ought to have known all this before? didn't you know it? ah? eh? Answer me. Did you know it? ah? eh?"

"I knew it, your glory," answered Selifan, bending down his head.

"And why didn't you tell me of it before? ah? eh?"

To this question Selifan gave no answer at

all, but bending down his head still lower, he seemed to say to himself: "Look here, how strangely all this has happened, to be sure: I knew all about it but said nothing!"

"And now, Sir, you go instantly, bring me a blacksmith, and mind that everything requisite is done and attended to in two hours. Do you hear and understand me? absolutely in two hours, and if you are not ready, then you know what the result will be. I shall drive you into a bull's horn, and tie you up with a knot." Our hero's anger had risen to a considerable pitch.

Selifan turned round to the door, as if with the intention of leaving the room, and executing his master's instructions; however, he stopped short, and said:

"I have forgotten to mention to your glory, that it would be a good plan to sell the tiger-spotted horse, because he is—I can assure you, Pavel Ivanovitch, the greatest idler and rascal I ever had to do with, he is such a horse, as I would pray Heaven to deliver me from."

"Well, I'm sure! you don't mean to say, Sir, that I am going to run to the market-place, and sell a horse to please you?"

"I invoke my patron saint as a witness, Pavel Ivanovitch, but that horse has only the appearance of a good horse, but at work he is the greatest rogue and idler. Such a horse—"

"Stupid donkey, I shall sell my horses when I choose. Do not presume to argue with me, but mind what I am telling you now; if you don't go instantly to fetch me a blacksmith, and if everything is not ready within two hours, you may depend upon such a combing—such a combing that you will have every difficulty in recognizing your own face again! Leave me! be off!"

Selifan left the room.

Tchichikoff had now lost even the slightest vestige of good temper, and kept thumping his old rusty sword on the ground, which travelled with him wherever he went, for the purpose of inspiring with due respect all those whom it concerned. He spent more than a quarter of an hour with the blacksmith before he could agree as to the terms for his job, because the blacksmith as is customary with them, was an impudent fellow, who perceiving that the gentleman was in a hurry, demanded of him six times his due.

It was of no use for Tchichikoff to reason with the man, to call him a scoundrel, robber, preying upon the unwary traveller, notwithstanding even his allusion to the day of judgment, he could produce no impression upon the hardened blacksmith ; he maintained his iron character to the last ; he not only insisted upon his own price, but even continued to job about his work exactly five hours and a half, instead of two hours.

During the whole of this time, Tchichikoff had the advantage of experiencing all the pleasant sensations, so very familiar to every traveller who has his portmanteaus ready packed, and useless papers and strings lying strewn about in the room, when a man does not yet deserve to be called a traveller, and when he also may not be called a fixed resident ; in such a position let us imagine him standing before the window in his room, looking down into the street, where he beholds a busy crowd passing along, talking of their grievances, and with a meaningless curiosity lifting their eyes to look upon him, and then again continuing their conversation, and passing on their way, which still more annoys the disappointed, not yet

journeying traveller. Whatever it may be, and whatever he may see, whether a little shop on the other side of the street, or the head of an old woman living in the opposite house, as she approaches the window, ornamented with old fashioned curtains, the sight of all this displeases and annoys him considerably, but still, and for all that, he will not leave his position. He continues to stand there fixedly, soon forgetting, then again looking steadfastly at everything before him, whether animate or inanimate; and out of pure vexation kills a poor fly, which had been already for some time buzzing and beating against the window pane.

However, there is an end to everything, and the long wished for moment has at last arrived; all was ready, the driving seat of the britchka was repaired most carefully, a new iron tyre fixed around the wheel, the horses led forward from their draining cup, and the impudent blacksmith, after receiving his pay, and counting the silver roubles, wished smilingly a pleasant journey to the traveller he had so shamelessly provoked.

At last the britchka was ready to start, and two hot cakes just brought were immediately

placed into it by Petruschka, whilst Selifan stocked the leather pockets of his seat with similar eatables, at last our hero himself escorted, and received by the flourish of numerous caps, and the ever attentive head waiter, in the same demi-cotton jacket and napkin across his shoulder, made his appearance before his travelling carriage, where he was greeted by a number of waiters, coachmen and idlers, who like to be always present on similar occasions; the gentleman traveller took possession of his high seat, and the britchka, that particular travelling carriage, to which bachelors and retired Stabz-capitans give the preference, and which had been standing under a shed for so long a time in the town of Smolensk; and whose inactivity may have already begun to fatigue our reader, at last drove out through the gates of the inn.

“I praise thee, O Lord!” said Tchichikoff to himself, while making a devout sign of the cross, which is customary among the faithful believers in the Greek church. Selifan made his whip crack, and used it immediately upon all three horses in succession; Petruschka kept running for awhile close to the carriage, and

then jumping cleverly upon the wheel step, he took his seat next to his brother servant; and our hero, seating himself still more comfortably upon his small Persian carpet, and carefully placing a leather cushion behind his back, unconsciously flattened the two hot cakes, and the light carriage began to roll and shake again quickly over the wretched pavement, which had the effect of tossing the occupant considerably about.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was with an undefinable feeling that Tchichikoff now began to look round him, at the houses, walls, gardens and streets, which on their part seemed also to be tossing about, until at last they disappeared before his sight, and which, Heaven knows he will perhaps never have the chance of seeing again during his life. At the turning of one of the streets, the britchka was suddenly obliged to stop, because of a funeral procession, which was just slowly bending its way across the street; it was headed as usual by a dozen mourners in deep black, carrying burning torches in their hands, and followed by the bearers of the military and civil orders,

worn by the deceased, and then by the funeral car and its followers.

Tchichikoff leaning forward ordered Petruschka to inquire who it was whom they were thus leading to his grave, and he received the answer that it was the right honorable the Imperial Procurator. Overwhelmed with unpleasant sensations and recollections, he immediately lent back into the farthest corner of his carriage, and covered himself with the carriage apron, and drew down the leather curtains.

At the time when the britchka was thus stopped, Selifan and Petruschka took their caps off with great fervour, and made the usual sign of the cross, and began to gape about and see who were present, and how they were following the mournful and exceedingly long procession, trying to count the number of those that were walking, and those that were driving in their own carriages behind the funeral car; their master, after having cautioned them not to recognise nor salute any of the servants with whom they might have made acquaintance, also begun to look, or rather peep attentively through the small glass square fixed in the leather curtains; he beheld nearly all the Im-

perial *employés* of his acquaintance forming the majority of the chief mourners. He began to feel alarmed lest they should accidentally recognise his carriage, however this was but a false alarm, their minds were differently pre-occupied.

They were even not occupied with any worldly talk, such as is usually carried on between persons that follow a funeral. All their thoughts, at that time, were principally concentrated upon themselves; they were thinking and asking themselves the question — what kind of a man the newly-appointed Governor-general would be, with what energy he would undertake his duties, and how he would receive them.

Behind the Imperial *employés*, who followed all walking, came the carriages from which ladies in mourning gowns were putting out their heads to look about them. By the movements of their lips and hands, it could easily be conjectured that they were engaged in lively conversation; very likely they also spoke of the arrival of the new Governor-general, and tried to imagine what kind of balls and routs he would be likely to give on the occasion of his

new appointment; and they seemed very anxious about their new dresses with the recent fashionable improvement of festoons and ornaments all over.

The private carriages were followed by a few empty droshkies, which concluded the procession, and at last the road was free and open again for our hero's britchka, which began to speed on to make up for lost time.

Opening now freely again the leather curtains of his carriages, Tchichikoff heaved a deep sigh, and pronounced, as if from the innermost of his soul :

"There he went, the Imperial Procurator ; he has lived and lived until he has come to his death ! and now they will advertise in the newspapers, that his existence has terminated to the unspeakable regret of his inferiors and superiors, as well as to humanity at large, a respected citizen, a rare father, a beloved husband, and much more, they will print in his memory ; add perhaps, that he was followed to his grave not only by his numerous friends, but also by many widows and orphans of the town ; but if we were to examine your virtues and qualities more minutely and conscientiously, we would find

perhaps nothing more remarkable than your bushy and heavy eyebrows."

After having concluded this observation, our hero ordered Selifan to speed on his horses, and meanwhile thought to himself—"however, it is rather lucky that I have met with a funeral procession; it is said that it prognosticates good fortune to meet with the dead."

Meanwhile, the britchka turned and passed through the more lonely and distant streets; soon after Tchichikoff saw only the long and uniform wooden walls of gardens and enclosed building grounds, which announced the end of the town. And now there was an end to the wretched pavement; and he had passed the last military frontier of the town of Smolensk, which now remained behind him; and he was again on the free and high wide road. And again, on either side of the britchka, were woods and forests, and fields and plains, brooks and wells, military posts, and grey villages, with chatting old women, and idle peasants, looking out from their huge beards, like a bear from his den.

At first, the changing scenes around him did not make any particular impression upon his

mind ; but by degrees, and as he continued to turn round to convince himself, that the town of Smolensk was really behind him, and nearly hidden from his sight, he began to pay a little more attention to the high road, and to his own reflections, which begun so fully to preoccupy his mind, that Smolensk was as much out of his mind as out of his sight ; and he really fancied that he had merely passed through once in his early childhood. At last, even the high road ceased to possess any attractions whatever for him, and he began slightly to incline his head upon the leather pillow, and close his eyes.

Our hero was suddenly aroused from his slumber by an approaching noise on the high road, behind his britchka. The noise approached rapidly, and seemed to be caused by the galloping of numerous horses.

“Hallo ! what are you about ?” said Tchichikoff, calling out to his coachman, Selifan ; “why don’t you drive on ?”

“Yes, your glory !” answered Selifan, in a slow voice, and with a sleepy countenance, without being able to comply at once with the request, so much was he benumbed by the chilly night-air.

“How are you driving, you stupid goose? Why don't you flog the horses?”

But before Selifan had the time to comply with his master's command, the last which either he or Petruschka was to receive from him; the horses galloping behind had rejoined the britchka, and in a few moments later Tchichikoff beheld before him the Commissioner of Police from Smolensk, and another gentleman on horse-back, who was introduced to him as an imperial messenger.

The imperial messenger transmitted to Tchichikoff a document, with the imperial seal beneath; after the hasty perusal of this mysterious document, our hero's countenance changed suddenly; his eyes became dim, and his face as pale as death. The imperial messenger then pointed silently to a sinister-looking carriage, called a Siberian kибитка, into which our hero was assisted, without being able to utter a syllable, and the next moment he was a dead man.

THE END.

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